UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF A FRENCH IMMERSION LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM

BY

Nadia Rousseau

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Nadia Rousseau

Edmonton, Alberta

Date: July 8th 1998

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a Dissertation entitled FRENCH IMMERSION LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM submitted by NADIA ROUSSEAU in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Tracey Derwing
Dr. T.M. Derwing

L McDonald
Dr. L. McDonald

Judy Cameron
Dr. J.A. Cameron

Jill McClay
Dr. J. McClay

Dr. F. Gobeil-Dwyer

L McDonald for
Dr. R. Sanaoui

DATE: June 17, 1998

ABSTRACT

The results of a qualitative evaluation of a French Immersion Learning DisabilIties Program (FILDP) are discussed. The project, in collaboration with Edmonton Public Schools, began in September 1996 with a class of thirteen students, all in their third or fourth year of schooling. The program was piloted because research evidence regarding the efficacy of a program that addresses learning disabilities in both languages is scarce and often contradictory. In addition to the qualitative component of the research, Edmonton Public Schools also monitored the project in a variety of ways over the past year and a half using a quantitative approach. Both sets of results are reported.

Evidence to date confirms that the French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program is a success. The children showed academic improvement as well as a more positive self-perception. Parents are also pleased with the program due to their children's improvements and the various components of the FILDP. Similarly, the teacher and teacher aide commented favourably on the students' progress.

Two descriptive profiles of immersion students with learning disabilities are also presented. The first profile illustrates the characteristics of students with learning disabilities in French Immersion as reported by parents, and the second profile illustrates characteristics of these students as reported by the teacher and teacher aide.

This dissertation is dedicated to all of us who believe that any individual has a choice; a choice of language, a choice of speech... It is also dedicated to all researchers and practitioners who have faith in the individual's choice and are willing to work with him/her, by first accepting the differences without judgments. I have met such individuals doing this research: Tracey Derwing, Angèle Aubin and her 13 wonderful students. Thank you!

Enfin, j'offre ce travail à mes deux enfants, Xavier et Samuel. Chaque jours, ils me font voir la complexité de la vie ainsi que sa beauté. Chaque jours, ils me rappèlent l'être humain et son histoire derrière la théorie.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Five and six year old children entering a French immersion (FI) program not only have to adapt to school, but also to a new language. This dual adaptation creates an initial period of language inadequacy during which the verbal language used by teachers has very little or no meaning. There is a large body of research in FI, most of which deals with the level of academic achievement and the cognitive abilities of these children (Cummins and Swain, 1986; Hammerly, 1989; Lapkin & Swain,1990). Although research has suggested a variety of affective factors contributing to success in second language learning (Burt, Dulay & Finocchiaro,1977; Krashen, 1982), very little is known about learner characteristics in early immersion.

Since the inception of FI programs in the 1960s, it has been difficult to identify children with potential language learning difficulties in these programs (Morton, 1985). Today, scholars, parents, and teachers still wonder if transferring to an English program is appropriate both socially and academically for these children (Bruck, 1979; Demers, 1994; Dubé, 1993; Wiss, 1987). In a study conducted by Rousseau (1995), an in-depth analysis of observation and interview data portrayed the kindergarten experience of two anglophone children in a total immersion program. These two children demonstrated different initial reactions to a second language learning situation, as well as different play behaviours and interaction styles. For example, the child who experienced little difficulty with second language learning demonstrated an affinity for play and personal contact. However, the child who experienced more difficulty in acquiring a second language also demonstrated difficulty with social skills and play behaviours (e.g., this child would only explore certain activities and would only play with one other student).

This research aims at extending the understanding of children who experience difficulty in immersion programs. Based on observations and interviews of FI students, parents, and teachers, I developed a preliminary evaluation checklist of behaviours and

characteristics of learners who are experiencing difficulties in an immersion program. In addition to the development of the checklist, I evaluated the Learning Disabilities French Immersion Program in which these students were placed. The Learning Disabilities French Immersion Program was a pilot project requested by parents and principals of French immersion sites under Edmonton Public Schools Division. Until the inception of this project, Edmonton Public Schools' learning disabilities program was available only in district centres, and only in English. The general placement practice in Edmonton is to recommend that students who have identified special needs not enrol in the French immersion program. If students in the program are experiencing learning difficulties, the practice has been to arrange for a transfer to an English-only program. The evaluation of the FI learning disability program was necessary because there is no clear evidence from other school districts regarding the efficacy of a program which addresses learning disabilities in both languages, and research on this topic is scarce (Bruck, 1979; Demers, 1994; Gravel, 1990; Wiss, 1987).

The behaviour checklist will assist educators in the early identification of pupils in need of additional help. It may be the case that transferring a child from immersion to English before trying to address the child's needs within the immersion program is unwarranted. Campbell (1992) and Bourassa-Tremblay (1992) support addressing the child's needs within immersion programs themselves. After investigating the reasons for transfer upon completion of 12 grade 6 children, Campbell found that a number of parents and teachers felt transfer was not the answer for children having difficulties in immersion; rather greater support services were required. However, other parents and teachers feel that children experiencing difficulties in immersion should be transferred because "children with major learning difficulties ... do not need the added pressure of being in French Immersion" (Campbell, 1992, p.194).

These conflicting views raise the following questions that are addressed in this dissertation: (1) What is the child's perception of his/her schooling experience in the Edmonton Public French immersion learning disabilities program (FILDP)? (2) What are parents' perceptions of their children's schooling experience prior to entry and after one year in the FILDP? (3) Are the teachers and parents satisfied with the Edmonton FILDP and in what ways? (4) What is the profile of these children? (5) What are the children's most important preoccupations? (6) Did children participating in the FILDP gain in French spelling, comprehension and word identification? (7) Did children participating in the FILDP gain in English reading decoding, spelling and reading comprehension? (8) How do FILDP students compare with students in the regular English Learning Disabilities Program? This descriptive case study provides a comprehensive profile of the less successful language learner in FI. It also sheds some light on how learning disabilities affect children's schooling experience in a FI context.

Delimitation

This two year study followed the progress of 13 children enrolled in a French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program.

Limitations and Implications

1. Only children who did not use French at home participated in the study. It should be noted that one parent is a francophone and used French in the interview, but reported using only English at home.
2. Only children previously identified as learning disabled and already enrolled in the FILDP participated in the study.
3. Given the small number of participants (i.e., 13 children, their parents and teachers), generalizations to all learning disabled children enrolled in French immersion programs cannot be made. However, the purpose of a descriptive study is to gain insights into the participants' actual experience. These insights are crucial in understanding learning characteristics of second language (L2) children.

Furthermore, even though two people's experiences will not be identical, commonalities in the experiences will exist.

4. The common characteristics of language learners with difficulties will require further extensive validation. However, the checklist developed here will provide FI educators and researchers with a starting point for future research in the development of remediation strategies for these children.

Summary

As French immersion programs are faced with a variety of students presenting a variety of needs, it is necessary to investigate how the teacher can best assist children with learning disabilities in the immersion setting. This study of the FILDP will provide information on the learners' characteristics as well as the efficacy of the program for this population.

Chapter II presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. Chapter III explains the design of the study. Chapter IV presents the results of this study as expressed by the parents, teachers and students. A quantitative component is included in this section based on Edmonton Public's own investigation of the effect of the FILDP on the students' achievement. Chapter V presents a discussion of the results and a conclusion.

CHAPTER II

Related Literature

Learning Disabilities

The field of learning difficulties has generated interest for nearly two centuries, starting around the year 1800 (Lovitt, 1989). Although "it has grown to include the largest groups of students receiving special services" (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 1992, p.73) there is as yet no universally accepted definition of this disorder. From the original 4% of learning disabled Canadian students in 1972, over 10% of the school age population were identified as having learning disabilities in the 1991-1992 school year (Smith, Luckasson & Crealock, 1995). In 1996, the Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) Learning Disabilities Program Review indicated that numerous definitions acknowledge a wide range of performance differences among the learning disabled population varying from subtle differences in performance to more severe disabilities spread over most areas of schooling. EPS also notes a distinction between specific and general learning disabilities, the first one being specific to a particular academic area such as mathematics while the other indicating a student lag in most or all areas.

Causes of learning disabilities are varied and complex. "Experts do not agree and therefore many etiologies have been proposed" (Winzer, 1996, p.226). However, a minimal brain dysfunction, biochemical disturbances, genetic factors, environmental factors, and a maturational lag are often reported in the literature (EPS, 1996; Winzer, 1996; Smith, Luckasson, & Crealock, 1995; TAAC, 1991).

Winzer (1996), Smith, Luckasson & Crealock (1995) , Alberta Education (1995), Kirby and Williams (1991), TAAC (1991), Smith (1991), and Mahoney & Resnick (1988) present the most often encountered characteristics of students with learning disabilities. Their lists include an important discrepancy between potential and academic achievement, attention problems, hyperactivity, impulsivity, poor motor coordination and

spatial relations, difficulty in problem solving, little involvement in task completion, memory problems, perceptual problems, language difficulties, poor organizational skills, and immature social skills.

Other characteristics of children with learning disabilities include:

1. Social norm violation. Even though learning-disabled students are aware of social norms, some of them are more willing than nondisabled peers to violate them.
2. Social cognition. Some learning-disabled children elicit negative reactions from others because they lack social comprehension skills.
3. Role taking skills. Some learning-disabled students have difficulty understanding and taking the perspective of others.
4. Referential communication. The learning-disabled child's tendency to have trouble communicating with others, both as a listener and a speaker, puts that child at risk for social difficulties.
5. Classroom behavior. Although teachers rate learning-disabled children as engaging in a variety of negative behaviors, researchers who have directly observed classroom interactions have not been able to discover exactly what it is the children actually do to evoke these negative ratings. One interesting hypothesis is that their nonverbal behavior contributes in some way to negative reactions (Bryan & Bryan, cited in Hallahan & Kauffman, 1991, p.140).

EPS eligibility criteria for the learning disabilities program emerged from both the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta and Alberta Education definitions of this disability. Since "Alberta Education does not provide dedicated grants for students with mild and moderate disabilities, including those with learning disabilities, school districts set their own criteria" (EPS, 1996, p.32). Those criteria are presented in appendix A.

Academic and Linguistic Achievement

In French immersion programs, the French language is used as the medium to teach subjects such as social studies, mathematics, and science to non French-speaking students. In early 1960, the first program was piloted in Toronto, soon to be followed in 1965 by a program in the Montreal suburb of St-Lambert, Quebec. French immersion programs gained in popularity across Canada. In Alberta, 28 000 students are presently enrolled in the program (Alberta Education, 1998). Parents of students enrolled in French immersion generally want their children to be bilingual for employment opportunities, but some are also motivated by the egalitarian ideal of unity in a bilingual Canada (Hammerly, 1989).

There is a large body of research on French immersion, most of which looks at level of academic achievement, first language (L1) development, and second language development. As Safty (1989) pointed out :

> Over the past twenty years literature on French immersion has mainly focussed on linguistic development of French immersion students' first language (English); their linguistic achievements in the second language (French); their academic achievements in subject matters taught in French -- generally mathematics and social studies -- and occasionally on the socio-psychological impact of bilingual education on immersion students. (p.549).

Parental concern about children's academic achievement in their second language has resulted in a great amount of research comparing academic achievement between students in regular English programs and French immersion programs. Swain (1996) explains "The hundreds of evaluations which have been conducted of different immersion programmes across Canada constituted an important step in reassuring educators and parents of their validity" (p.91). Most research indicates that children enrolled in early

total immersion programs ultimately perform as well as their English-instructed peers (Cummins & Swain, 1986). After an extensive review of research dealing with L1 and L2 development, academic achievement in other subjects, IQ and academic success, and social and psychological effects of immersion, Lapkin and Swain (1984) concluded that:

> The research and evaluation studies associated with French immersion programs have demonstrated that students from a majority-language group can be taught in a second language with no long-term negative effects on first language development or on content learning, while at the same time becoming highly proficient in the target language. (p.53).

Cummins and Swain (1986) explain that although immersion students are initially behind students in unilingual English programs, within a year of the introduction of English Language Arts into the curriculum, French immersion students perform equally with students in English programs on standardized tests of English achievement. The authors add that the results are equivalent even if English Language Arts is not introduced before grade 3 or 4. Lapkin and Swain (1990) conclude:

> The use of standardized tests of English achievement in hundreds of program evaluations conducted over the past twenty years has permitted researchers to dispel fears of the possible negative impact of French-medium instruction on the first language development of anglophone students.(p.394).

Even more interesting, Lapkin and Swain (1990) report research indicating that an intensive initial exposure to French (early total immersion) has some positive effects on English skills. The authors specify that these positive effects have not been associated with a less intensive immersion program.

As for the development of the second language (French), secondary school graduates approach native-like levels of performance in reading and listening comprehension, but remain behind Francophone peers in their speaking and writing skills (Lapkin & Swain, 1990). These findings are consistently reported. For example, in 1983, Swain and Lapkin (in Swain, 1996), reported that by grade 6, immersion students had attained near-native proficiency in listening and reading comprehension. However, their productive skills, (i.e., speaking and writing), had remained non-native-like, although immersion students have no difficulty in conveying what they want to say. In 1982, Swain and Lapkin reported similar findings.

An important variable influencing second language development was identified by Swain and Lapkin (1982):

> One further point should be made about the French language achievement of the early total immersion students. Two alternative settings for such programs have been studied: immersion centres, where only the immersion program is housed in a given school; and dual-track schools, in which the immersion and regular English programs co-exist . It was found that the French language skills of the immersion students were enhanced by studying in immersion centres where a greater amount of French is used in the wider school environment beyond the classroom. (p.42).

Another important factor in second language development involves the different types of immersion programs. Lapkin and Swain (1990) report that early immersion students outperform late immersion students on selected speaking measures (e.g., fluency) and in listening comprehension. Lapkin, Hart and Swain (1991) state that: "Overall, early immersion students outperform middle immersion students in varying degrees in all four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing)" (p.31).

Similarily, Cummins and Swain (1986) report that students from an early immersion program performed significantly better than students enrolled in core French as a second language (FSL) programs (20-40 minutes of daily FSL instruction).

Although there seems to be a general consensus on the second language outcome of immersion, one dissident, Hammerly (1989), argues that immersion has serious negative effects: "Although the students managed to communicate nearly all of their ideas, they [do] so in Frenglish, not French. Frenglish is not a language, nor a dialect, but an embarrassment." (p.18). Hammerly (1989) believes Frenglish, "a very incorrect classroom pidgin - a hybrid between limited French vocabulary and mostly English structure " (p.20), is the result of the pressure put on the child to communicate in French even when grammatically and linguistically incorrect. Hammerly has been accused of misinterpreting and misrepresenting French immersion research (Allen, Cummins, Harley, Lapkin & Swain, 1989). By limiting his interpretation of more than 25 years of research on development of French language skills in immersion to oral production only, Allen et al. see in Hammerly's interpretation "an excessively narrow view of what second language proficiency entails" (1989, p.314). Although French immersion students are behind in oral production of French when compared to native speakers, they are fluent, confident, and able to communicate in the second language. However, it is reported that grammatical errors made by grade 6 immersion students are rarely corrected by their teachers. Swain (1996) indicates that "only 19% of the grammatical errors students made were corrected while the remainder were ignored by the teachers" (p.96). Similarly, Sanaoui (1996) reports that in French as a second language conversation classes for adults, less attention is given to "syntactic, morphological, phonological, and sociolinguistic aspects or discourse aspects of word use" (p.183) and more attention is given to "the semantic aspects of lexical items and their use in specific contexts" (p.183).

In more recent years, the evaluation of French abilities of immersion students remains crucial. A variety of approaches are being developed in order to meet the

pedagogical changes: "The changes teachers have brought to their practices are prompting them to investigate a variety of approaches to evaluating. It is clear that they need more than the conventional paper-and-pencil tests that often over-emphasize isolated subskills or recall of linguistic knowledge" (Bélanger, 1997, p.23). Bélanger indicates that the assessment of French as a second language should include the monitoring of the pupils' progress and their communicative language performance. In addition, according to the same author, it should provide quality feedback and clear criteria of performance. Similarily, Lavigne (1997) believes that portfolio assessment in French immersion is a good way to bring together the assessment process, the teaching methodology and the curriculum prescribed by Alberta Education. Frederickson and Cline (1996) also emphasize the importance of the context in which language learning takes place in order to insure a meticulous assessment: "Effective communication and suitable test content may be necessary for successful assessment, but they are not sufficient. For bilingual pupils in particular it is also essential that the context empowers their achievement" (p. 2).

Social and Psychological Aspects

In 1987, Forsyth conducted a study comparing self-concept, anxiety, and security of children in gifted, French immersion, and regular classes. The French immersion students appeared to be less secure. The author recommends:

> Teachers of children in French Immersion programs might be able to help them, through discussion and example, to accept the fact that it is all right to make mistakes and discourage them from being defensive or rationalizing and blaming others. The children should be encouraged to take initiative but in a way that does not put pressure on them and minimizes fear of failure (p.156-157).

Hammerly (1989) discusses the emotional consequences of early immersion:

> It stands to reason that removing children from the company of their neighborhood friends, and placing them in a socially and linguistically alien environment where they are unable to communicate even at the most basic level is bound to cause some emotional difficulties. French immersion teachers, parents, and graduates tell stories of children coming home crying every afternoon for months. Being expected to communicate in a language they have no mastery of naturally causes anxiety in many children. While some children find it emotionally difficult to start school even in their native language, the French immersion situation makes the emotional disruption much more serious (p.8-9).

Since young children usually do not choose what kind of school they will attend, Hammerly (1989) believes that as a result, children placed in French immersion programs "find themselves lost linguistically at first" (p.37). Hammerly also criticizes the language interaction between the teacher and the student as a possible source of emotional difficulty:

> Another emotional difficulty for young FI pupils is that there is no one in the school they can discuss personal problems with, for FI teachers insist on speaking only French. Some people deny that this is a hardship, since FI pupils are free to speak to their FI teachers in English. But such a claim fails to admit that a conversation in two languages is very artificial, and that children should not be forced to engage in such strange, stilted talk when they have something especially important to say (p.10).

Swain and Lapkin (1981) are among those who consider the linguistic demands not to be a source of additional stress for the children:

> "Their concern [parents and educators] was fed by a mistaken belief that the children would be denied the possibility of spontaneously expressing their feelings and ideas because they would be allowed to speak only in French ...True, the teachers speak only French, but they understand English, and for much of the first year the children talk to each other and their teachers in English. The children are certainly not inhibited from expression in their mother tongue" (p.108).

In more recent years, Weber and Tardif (1990) investigated children's experience of French immersion in kindergarten. They reported "how easily the children adapted to the situation - with very few tears, very little fuss, and with lots of smiles and enthusiasm despite an obvious initial shyness in some of the children" (p.55).

Similarly, Rousseau (1995) explored the initial experience of early total immersion in kindergarten. She reported on the differences between early immersion experiences of two students; one for whom language learning was a source of difficulties, and one for whom language learning seemed to take place naturally:

> Marc's and Natalie's total early immersion kindergarten experience is marked with a number of differences in regard to their friendship and play behaviours, their success in the instructional part of the program, their use of French outside the classsroom, and the types of parental support and involvement in their schooling experiences (p.78).

Hammerly (1989) interviewed a FI graduate in which the student expressed her memories of her first 2 years of French immersion: " There were lots of games being played ... but I really didn't know what was going on. Actually, I was physically ill for

the first two grades ... Physically ill because I was so worried about - I was convinced that my parents had sent me to the wrong school ..." (p.148). She remembers FI being very difficult "because I had no friends from my own neighborhood to play [with] after school" (p.148). She also remembers thinking she was being "chastized" by the teacher as a result of not understanding the instruction. However, looking back, she also remembers feeling proud of being in French immersion once she reached grade two. She concluded by saying she was glad she took FI.

Cummins and Swain (1986) recognize that "social and emotional crises" can accompany bilingualism. However, ensuring that the first language is well acquired before focusing on the acquisition of a second language can diminish these crises:

> ...ensure that the child's home language is adequately developed before worrying about progress in the second language. It implies that the first language is so instrumental to the emotional and academic well-being of the child, that its development must be seen as a high, if not the highest, priority in the early years of schooling. (p.101)

Cummins and Swain (1986) believe that the French immersion programs allow acceptance and the use of a child's home language in school which is "one of the first steps in creating an environment where learning can occur, an environment which fosters feelings of self-worth and self-confidence" (p.101). The authors state that in immersion programs, the language in the corridors and in the playground is English, the child's home language. Furthermore, even if the language of instruction is French, the children are allowed to communicate in English and the immersion teachers are bilingual. Therefore, the teachers understand whatever the children say to them. "In this way, the teachers can respond relevantly, appropriately and supportively to their students, and build from the child's existing linguistic repertoires and interests" (p.102). In assessing

L2 competency in immersion classrooms as part of an ethnographic study, Weber and Tardif (1991b) also explained that in immersion classrooms "children were permitted to converse in English, but the teacher spoke to them almost exclusively in French" (p.220).

Reviewing research that focused on social and psychological aspects of immersion education, Swain and Lapkin (1982) conclude:

> First, the adjustment made by immersion children to their school experience was examined by looking at studies of the children's behaviour in class and their view about their school program. The results suggest that early immersion students adjust readily to their school environment and report satisfaction with their program and their way of studying French - more so than do late immersion students or students studying core French in short daily periods. (p.79).

Swain and Lapkin (1981) also report that in general, early immersion students have a positive self-concept. These students favour increased contact with francophones, which is indicative of a positive attitude and a step in the direction of enhancing French language skills.

Suitability of French Immersion Programs

Literature on the suitability of French immersion programs for all children is limited. Furthermore, the few studies available provide contradictory information. In 1979, Bruck questioned the suitability of early French immersion programs for children with learning problems because all the available research results were based on group averages; this analytical approach did not indicate "whether all children in immersion programs benefit equally from this educational experience" (p.86). More than ten years later, Lapkin and Swain (1989) attest to the lack of research investigating characteristics, problems, resources, and services available for children having difficulties in FI:

> The research on access of students with special characteristics (learning disabled, gifted, etc.) to immersion has been scant, and although there have been recent attempts to study students transferring out of immersion, this is an area where much remains to be learned (cited in Campbell, 1992, p.39).

More recently, Obadia (1997) indicates that among many challenges, immersion programs were faced with a large number of students transferring out of immersion: " le taux de déperdition ou décrochage" (p.12). What do we know about learning disabled children's transferring from immersion to regular English? Bruck's (1979) longitudinal study, carried out over an eight year period with kindergarten to grade three children at the McGill-Montreal Children's Hospital Learning Centre, indicated that children in French immersion who had specific problems benefited from the immersion experience in that "they continued to develop facility in their first language; they learned their basic academic skills at the predicted rate; they exhibited no severe behavioral problems; and of most importance, they acquired competence in French" (p.88). A second study by Bruck (1979) aimed at evaluating the academic, emotional and social consequences of program transfer of children with learning disability. Bruck conducted case studies of nine children registered in kindergarten to grade four, each of whom had transferred from a French immersion to an English program. This study indicated that removing children from immersion and placing them in a regular English program did not lead to better academic outcomes. According to Bruck, "those children who experience academic difficulty in French immersion would experience academic difficulty in the regular unilingual program as well" (cited in Wiss, 1989, p.516). Bruck explained that transferring the child may affect the child's self-esteem as well as giving him/her the impression of failure, which in turn may aggravate any learning difficulties. Furthermore, if a child is transferred before completion of grade 3, this child will be

behind his/her peers in the regular English program because English language arts is introduced later in the immersion program. Discussing second language learners' difficulties, Frederickson and Cline (1996) report similar findings and they state that we need to differentiate between "genuine learning difficulties rather than just a problem over language" (p.3). Similarly Rogers and Pratten (1996) note that "this decision between the identification of learning needs and language needs is often fraught with difficult political and ethical considerations" (p.77). Therefore, the priority should be on finding the cause of the difficulties since it is highly relevant to intervention decisions (Frederickson and Cline, 1996). Also, according to Cummins (1984), in assisting the children, one should embed the skill to be learned in a context meaningful to the child.

Morrison (1989) also argues that, "The transfer process may be a traumatic experience for those children who see themselves or are seen by their parents as having failed, in spite of evidence to the contrary" (p.3). Similarily, Cummins (1984) found that many children who are transferred out of immersion programs experience feelings of frustration and unhappiness during the year. "For some, self-esteem was low either because they had to repeat a grade, or because they felt that the English stream class was of lower status than the immersion class" (p.174).

According to Cummins (1984), the focus should not be on transferring a child, but on the benefits of the program to that child. Cummins states that Bruck's findings "show that such children can acquire high levels of L2 fluency in an immersion or bilingual learning context where there is considerable exposure to comprehensible input in the L2" (1984, p.175).

Wiss (1989) has suggested that for a minority of children whose cognitive and linguistic skills are considerably delayed, the immersion program may not be of benefit. She makes a distinction between learning disabled and developmentally immature children: "LD children can handle the linguistic demands but not the academic demands; developmentally immature children cannot handle the interactive effect of the linguistic

and academic demands" (p.200). Wiss' interpretation supports Cummins' (1984) view that learning disabilities should be evident in both languages; French and English. She also sheds new light into Trites (1981; 1983; 1986) greatly criticized (Cummins, 1984) longitudinal study of 200 kindergarten to grade 1 students indicating that for some children, a "maturational lag" (p.64) would be responsible for difficulties when they are educated in a French immersion program. Trites states that those difficulties would not be present in a regular English program. However, since there is no empirical data available to support the existence of a minority group of children with learning difficulties in immersion due to developmental immaturity, transferring children between programs should not be a first choice. For those children, the French immersion program may be their only opportunity for bilingualism. Campbell (1992) cites difficulties encountered "in both English and French Language Arts" as the most common reasons for transfer. Hayden (1988) and Campbell (1992) also suggest that decisions to transfer a child from immersion to an English program should depend on several interrelated factors in addition to learning difficulties with Language Arts, such as poor test results, lack of special help at school, a shift to abstract work, discipline problems, immaturity, emotional stress and inability of parents to help their child with homework. According to four teachers participating in Campbell's case study of 22 children who transferred from French immersion to an English program after completion of grade six, "more resource help for students encountering difficulties, more teacher assistants, and more print material at the students' level are needed in the FI classroom" (1992, p.213). Campbell's research reports that teachers found motivation to play a key role in language learning. Teachers also believed that children with serious emotional and learning problems whose first language is not firmly developed should not enroll in FI.

Following his extensive review of the literature on special needs students and bilingualism, Cummins (1984) indicates that for most children experiencing difficulties in French immersion programs, similar difficulties remain when they are transferred into a

regular English program. He therefore makes three recommendations for future research in order to address every child's needs:

> (1) provision of appropriate remedial services (in French) for students who encounter difficulties in immersion; (2) dissemination of information to educators and parents about the research data showing that neither immersion itself nor bilingualism contributes to children's academic problems; (3) ensuring that literacy and other academic instruction in immersion is such that students of both high and low ability are motivated to become intrinsically involved in learning (p.176).

The following study will address the recommendation made by Cummins to provide appropriate remedial services for students who encounter difficulties in French immersion. This research will evaluate the effectiveness of a learning disabilities French immersion program as perceived by the children, their parents and teacher, and provide a checklist that teachers can use for identifying students experiencing difficulties.

Summary

Knowledge related to transfer and learning difficulties in early FI programs is contradictory and complex. Educators in these programs require a better understanding of the learner characteristics and behaviours of FI students experiencing difficulties. Understanding learner characteristics will lead to the early identification of children with such problems, and the development of support services currently lacking in FI programs. Identification of services and their efficacy is the first necessary step towards the provision of a comprehensive, quality learning environment.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

A descriptive case study approach was used to collect the data. As stated by Tardif (1994), a limited amount of research has been conducted that investigates classrooms in order to understand the pedagogy of immersion, as well as the learning processes and experiences of FI students. Furthermore, Weber and Tardif (1991a; 1991b) strongly believe that one of the best ways to assess L2 competence in an immersion classroom is through an ethnographic approach, "in novel but authentic and engaging contexts of communication" (p. 916).

According to Merriam (1988), the descriptive case study "is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (p.xiv). In this case, it is the persons (students) in a specific program (FI) that will be holistically described.

As Yin (1984, cited in Merriam, 1988) mentions, one of the strengths of a case study is "its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations" (p.8). Tardif (1991), Tardif and Weber (1987), Weber and Tardif (1991) and Lavallée (1990), also support the notion that the study of L2 requires multiple observations in the actual setting. As Guba (1981) states: "Human behavior is rarely if ever context-free; hence knowledge of human behavior individually or in social groups is necessarily ideographic, and differences are at least as important as similarities to an understanding of what is happening" (p.78). FI, being based on a pedagogy of communication, is best evaluated or investigated as it occurs through real communication. In fact, the case study is "the examination of an instance in action" (MacDonald & Walker, cited in Merriam, 1988, p.11). As explained by Yin, it is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from the context.

Bracketing

My interests in French immersion and learning disabilities come from personal experiences; first as a second language student ranging from high school, college to graduate student; second, from a professional point of view not only when dealing with children experiencing a variety of difficulties but also when training teachers is this area; and third from being a mother of two who is sometimes disappointed in the school, feeling it does not respond to my children's needs.

Student Hat

I have had rich experiences studying in my second language (English) for a number of years. I know how it feels like to express oneself in another language, to be encouraged or discouraged by the context. Even with many challenges, as the French immersion students who decide to stay in immersion, I recognize determination for learning a second language and loving doing so.

Professional Hat

In teaching student teachers and teachers how to respond to children with a variety of needs, I realize, each day, that most teachers and education students want to be able to provide good learning strategies to children and want to become good teachers. However, many times they express their misunderstanding of a learning disability because it is not visible to the eye or because they do not know "what to do with them." Many times the solution is to "switch them to English, they will know what to do...they have specialized people"! My question is: Why do this if they want to stay in the immersion program? Why not provide the help in immersion itself?

Mother's Hat

As a mother, I sometimes feel the school system is not being attentive to each child's needs. There are budget restrictions, a prescribed philosophy of education, a restricted number of specialists. A large number of teachers are overwhelmed by changing policies, changing curriculum, and growing numbers of students in the

classroom, in a more and more complex world. I want to know the children's stories as well as the teachers.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 13 children enrolled in a split grade three/four Learning Disability French Immersion Program piloted by Edmonton Public school. All children were diagnosed with a learning disability in the spring of 1996 using Edmonton Public School Board Guidelines (see Appendix A for eligibility documentation). Assessment of learning disabilities was conducted in English. During the second year of the study, one child moved to another city. As a result, all quantitative measures taken after June 1997 included 12 children.

All participating children were given letters describing the purpose of the study to take home to their parents as well as consent forms (see Appendix B). The teacher and teacher aide were also provided with consent forms. Participants were ensured that information would remain confidential; they would be identified only by pseudonyms. All forms of data were safe guarded in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Alberta. All audio-taped data were destroyed on completion of the study. In addition, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Edmonton Public School Board did not have access to the raw data but were provided with a report explaining the aggregate results of this study. Only the primary researcher and her supervisory committee had access to the data.

Data Collection

Parent Interviews and Survey

Audio-taped interviews of an hour in length were conducted with parents of each of the language learners. Prior to the interviews, parents were contacted and asked whether they would prefer to meet the researcher in their homes or at their children's

schools. Appointments were made at the parents' convenience. A semi-structured interview schedule including some demographic questions was used (see Appendix C). Here, the interview was used as a "conversational relation between two people, one in which they come to know as much about each other as they learn about whatever is the topic of the conversation" (Weber, 1986, p.65). In this case, the subject of conversation was the parents' perception of their children's experience in FI. At the end of the school year, the Learning Disabilities Program Review: Parents Survey (see Appendix D) was administered during a group meeting. Two additional questions regarding the children's overall changes during the academic year were added to the original survey (see appendix E). Parents were also encouraged to bring samples of their children's work since they first started in the French immersion program.

Teachers' Perceptions and Survey

An ongoing communication channel was maintained with the teacher and teacher assistant participating in the study. Dialogue with the teacher and teacher assistant was directed toward their perception of their students' experiences, behaviours, learning processes, learning styles, and/or interaction styles. These dialogues between the researcher and the teacher and teacher assistant were audio-taped and/or noted on paper depending on when and where the discussions took place. Field notes were taken during the interview in order to facilitate active listening (Seidman, 1991). The teacher and teacher assistant were asked to describe each child's learning and social characteristics in addition to giving their impressions of the FILDP. They were asked to share their teaching strategies and the reasons why they chose those strategies. They were also asked to collect samples of work from each of the 13 children. At the end of the school year, the Learning Disabilities Program Review: Staff Survey (see appendix F) was completed by the teacher and teacher aide.

Child Interviews

The children were interviewed twice individually in their school. All interviews were audio-taped. In order for the researcher " to be more able to see things from a child's point of view, to recognize the child as a source of information about how to teach or otherwise be helpful to the child, and to understand and relate to the child as a whole, complex person" (Ellis, 1994, p.367), Ellis' *Narrative Interview Schedule* (1994) was used (see Appendix G). The narrative inquiry supports "a more self-reflective, connected, and friendly way of being with children or young people" (Ellis, 1994, p.367). According to Ellis, the narrative inquiry constitutes a "human" way of drawing out information about learning, behavior and motivation. Throughout the interviews, I also kept a record of my own observations, feelings and reactions while in the schools. These notes are referred to as fieldnotes. The Learning Disabilities Program Review: Students Survey (see Appendix H) was also administered at the end of the school year as a focus group interview. It was anticipated that the data would be richer if students were not required to respond in writing.

Participant Observation

Participant observation occured throughout the entire length of the study for several days in the months of September, October, January, February, May and June. Audio-tapes of the children's self-awareness session and reading remediation activities were provided. Observation is necessary to identify the contexts in which the children are learning and working with their learning disabilities. As explained by Merriam (1988),

> As an outsider, an observer can notice things that have become routine to the participants themselves, things which may lead to understanding the context. The participant observer gets to see things firsthand and to use his or her own

knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed, rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviewers (p.88).

Document Analysis/Portfolio Assessment

Finally, children's projects and activity sheets were analyzed using Martin's (1994) recommendations. According to Martin, "Portfolios provide for the opportunity to record data about the process of the child's experience and evidence of the products of the child's work" (p.223). Martin also believes that portfolios "encourage professional accountablility in that they provide documentary evidence of evaluation processes and program planning" (p.224). Materials included in portfolios assisted the researcher in evaluating the child's language learning level, learning style, strengths and weaknesses. Parents were also encouraged to contribute materials to the portfolio. In addition to portfolios developed during the school year, portfolios of five of the participants covering kindergarten to grade three or four were made available and analyzed. These materials proved useful in understanding the child's experiences, successes and failures.

Learning Disabilities Program Review, Parent and Teacher Survey

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey used with the parents, children and teachers was designed by Edmonton Public Schools to assess parent and teacher satisfaction of the program. This information allowed for a better understanding of the reasons behind their assessment of the FILDP.

Other Academic Measures

An Edmonton School District consultant, under the district supervision, conducted a series of achievement measures throughout the study using the French Immersion Achievement Test, the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, and a district measure of reading and writing achievement, the HLAT. Results of these measures were shared with me in February 1998. They have been included in chapter IV-Results.

Data Coding

All audio-tapes were transcribed. The surveys, the teachers' interviews, as well as the parents' documentation were also transcribed.

After a thematic analysis of the data, a parent and the teacher were asked to give their interpretation of randomly selected sections of my interpretation of our dialogue. In doing so, the researcher ensures better reliability in the interpretation process (McCutcheon, 1981). Both parent and teacher felt at ease with the data interpretation.

Using qualitative analysis software (Hyperqual, 1991), all transcribed interviews, classroom sessions, parents' documentation and journals were coded using network analysis (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The researcher's fieldnotes were added to the corresponding interviews at the beginning of the transcript.

Once the coding task was completed, all codes were sorted so that each interview and document was regrouped into meaning units by code. Categories were then formed by regrouping related coded meaning units. Finally, themes were identified from the categories for all sources of data. According to Cohen and Manion (1994) the development of an elaborate system of categories involved in a network analysis preserve "the essential complexity and subtlety of the materials under investigation" (1994, p.213).

Data Analysis

Given the intuitive insights associated with qualitative data analysis (Borg and Gall, 1989; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992), having the participants involved in the interpretation of the data is appropriate and adds rigor to the data analysis process:

> Because the qualitative researcher usually attempts to reconstruct reality from the frame of reference of the subjects, it follows logically that the respondents may in some cases be better able than the investigator to understand the complex

interactions that have been observed and account for the influence of local values on these interactions. (Borg and Gall, 1989, p.386).

In order to prevent bias in the data interpretation, the researcher discussed the interview data with a parent and the teacher. Only summary sections of interviews were reviewed. In verifying the researcher's interpretation of an event with the informants, Riley (1990) recommends discussing only the summary of findings since "many informants may be daunted by being offered a long document to read, or embarrassed to see all the incoherencies of their own speech on a transcript" (p.126).

Checking interpretation of data with each participant is a good way to ensure rigor and trustworthiness (Riley, 1990). However, it is not necessary to verify all data with all of the participants in order to obtain evidence for valid interpretation. According to Riley (1990), using multiple sources, quotations, and relating the findings to other studies are additional ways to support the researcher's findings. However, as explained by Riley (1990), it is important to recognise the researcher's own ideas about the data being interpreted:

> It is important to understand the inherent limitations on interpretations of qualitative data. There are two key points. The first is that you can only offer a personal interpretation and other interpretations will always be possible. Meaning is personal and events have different meanings for those present, for you and for your clients. Meanings can also change with time. The second key point is that you have made a limited case study and you cannot be sure how far your interpretation applies outside that case study. (p.69).

Methodological triangulation was achieved using multiple sources of data gathering on the same object of study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In the data

interpretation, only the categories that were most frequently identified by a majority of parents are presented.

CHAPTER IV

Results

What Is The Children's Perception Of Their Schooling Experience In The Edmonton Public French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program (FILDP)?

Children's Profiles

Observation of the children over the first year of the program indicated a strong shift in their self-perception and active learning. They all demonstrated some positive changes, although some children made greater progress than others. For example, the child who benefited the most from the program (Child A) was initially very shy. He talked in a very small voice and would not volunteer any information in academic nor non-academic tasks. Once Child A's strong interest for sports was discovered, an intervention was build around that theme. Child B, who shared similar interests, became very involved and befriended Child A. They were able to share their schooling and out of school experiences based on the same underlying interest: sports. By the end of the first year, Child A had made enormous progress both academically and socially. His voice was much louder; he sat up straight in his desk, and he took risks while maintaining a positive relationship with Child B. Child A also made remarkable progress in organization, reading and mathematics, achieving at or above grade level. Parents of Child A were initially shocked when they heard about their son's learning disabilities. However, throughout the year, they made it a priority to learn and read as much as they could about learning disabilities. They participated in parent-teacher interviews and followed the teacher's recommendations regarding strategy use when their child was given homework.

Child C, who showed more difficulties throughout the first year of the program than any of the other children, also demonstrated improvements, mostly

related to social interaction and self-perception. At the beginning of the year, Child C was withdrawn, keeping her head down, not looking adults or other children in the eye, and barely engaging in any conversation or other verbal activities. Child C was often alone. By the end of the first year, child C had not achieved academically, however, enormous social progress was made. She reported feeling less scared. In class and during interviews, Child C learned to face her interlocutor and to actively participate in class. Her body language was much more assertive then before. Furthermore, Child C engaged in far more interaction with the other children outside the classroom than previously. Child C's parents were also involved in their daughter's schooling. They participated in parent-teacher interviews and followed the teacher's recommendations. Child C's parents were not surprised when told of their daughter's learning disabilities; they already knew she struggled in a variety of areas.

Child A and Child C received the same attention throughout the study but their academic progress was not comparable. Even though Child A and Child C's parents were involved and participated willingly, Child C had to deal with important and difficult family issues, which was not the case for Child A. I suspect that Child A was better able to concentrate on the task then Child C, given their different challenges. For child C, the program offered a positive and caring atmosphere which greatly helped improving her self-perception and social interactions. Child A benefited from the same atmosphere but he also had better disposition for learning, not having to face the same challenges outside of school.

Children's Questionnaire

The children were asked to write how they felt before they started in the program and how they felt one year into the program. Both questions were asked in June 1997. All children responded eagerly. As shown in Table 1, the children moved from a negative perception to a much more positive attitude after one year into the program. Prior to the program, children reported feeling "afraid, crazy, and dumb ;" "having

horrible days and terrible days;" feeling "really little;" feeling "scared and like running away;" feeling "scared and frightened." One year into the program, they stated "Now, I'm not scared;" "Now, I'm not frightened;" "I have learned that LD students have different problems;" "I can do more stuff like other kids; I've changed a lot and now I feel better than ever;" "I really feel better."

They also reported improvement in school related tasks: "my reading has improved;" "I'm much better at French reading;" "it's easy for me to think of things to write;" "I'm very good in division;" "I know 1000x more than I did before;" "Now I can read better and spell better."

Table 1. Feelings expressed by 13 children

Prior to the FILDP	**n**	**s**	**One year into the FILDP**	**n**	**s**
Difficulties in specific tasks	11	11	Improvement in specific tasks	15	13
Being afraid and sad	9	8	Feeling clever	8	6
Feeling without control and not understanding what is wrong	9	8	Felling less scared and afraid	7	6
Feeling "stupid" or "dumb"	8	7	Feeling of well-being	6	6
			Good understanding of what a learning disability is and having a sense of control	6	5
			Feeling of greater support	5	5
			Knowledge of strategies	2	2

n= number of responses in each category; s= number of students represented in each category.

What Were Parents' Perceptions Of Their Children's Schooling Experience Prior To Entry And After One Year In The FILDP?

Open-ended Questions (June 1997)

Twelve parents responded to two open-ended questions accompanying the Learning Disabilities Program Review for Parents. The parents were satisfied with the program and talked in very positive ways about the help provided to their children. As shown in Table 2, the parents' comments can be classified into five categories: 1) the components of the program as they relate to classroom practices; 2) the children's changed behaviours; 3) an increased awareness of what learning disabilities are; 4) parents' concerns and suggestions; and 5) the context in which learning takes place. Unless otherwise indicated, the parents'views presented here where responses are over 10, represent a majority of the parents.

Components of program as they relate to classroom practices

The 12 parents who responded to the open-ended questions of the Learning Disabilities Program Review surveys believed the "small class size," the "provision of learning strategies," and the "focus on learning deficits" provided a better place for their children to learn. One child was "more at ease with schooling, and achievement as instruction and class size met her needs." Another child "seems to participate more in class because the class size is smaller and she doesn't feel so badly about not knowing something."

Table 2. Parents' perception of their children's schooling experience in the FILDP

Categories	n=	Components included in categories	n=
Components of program	40	• individual assistance	12
		• increased learning	12
		• teacher (positive comments)	11
		• French services	3
		• children's needs (positive)	2
Behavioural changes	21	• attitude changes (positive)	18
		• sense of hope	3
Learning disabilities awareness	11	• learning disabilities awareness	11
Parents' worries	7	• suggestions	5
		• concerns	2
Context	6	• School and classroom atmosphere	2
		• Free communication	4

n= number of responses

Generally the program helped the children "enjoy and feel comfortable in school," and provided " the extra help needed by targeting the problem."

All parents also believed their children have improved their performance during the school year in mathematics, French or reading.

The child's changed behaviours.

Parents commented on their children's positive attitude toward learning and self-perception. They reported an increase in "confidence," in "positive attitude," in "self-esteem," and in "social aspects." According to the parents, the attitude change facilitated a variety of school related activities: "She now enjoys coming to school;" "She likes to read and write stories;" "She enjoys reading more now than ever before;" "The staff and resources made previously awkward or lost feeling become a positive attitude;" "She seem to enjoy learning new things now whereas before she dreaded new things and

challenges;" "He has a great sense of accomplishment this year." According to the parents, their children are less frustrated and not as tired. As a result, homework or school related preparation does not imply a "fight" or "l'enfer (hell)" anymore. The parents indicated that the increased self-esteem and positive self-perceptions bring up a better sense of control and acceptance for these children. The children are perceived as being "more confident and eager," not "disadvantaged and no longer afraid to try new things;" and most of all "feeling good" about themselves.

An increased awareness of what learning disabilities are.

Parents talked of their children's knowledge and understanding of their problems. They reported the children "admitting " the existence of "problems and feeling confident that they would be overcome." As a result, parents saw their children as being more able to "take charge of (their) own learning and control of (their) behaviour."

Parents' concerns and suggestions.

Some parents indicated concern "about what happens at the end of next year?" They stated the LD program "must continue to be offered in French." They believed "more schools should be participating" in it, and it should be "available to the public," and "offered in all schools." They also suggested that "other children in the school should be aware of what LD means."

The context in which learning takes place.

According to the parents, the success of the program was mainly due to the support they received through the school, the compassionate teacher, and the context in which free communication took place: "Shyness is being overcome among peers so freer communication and trial and error is accepted." This atmosphere encourages the children "to participate, to try new things, to feel part of a group and not left out because of learning problems."

Are The Teachers, And Parents Satisfied With The Edmonton FILDP And, If So, In What Ways?

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey For Parents

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey was administered to 12 of the 13 parents in June 1997 (see Table 3). Overall, parents were satisfied with the program and the effects it had on their children's schooling. Most parents indicated that being in the FILDP improved their children's academic skills, self-confidence, ability to cope with the learning problem, and understanding of their difficulties. The majority of parents were also satisfied with the help received in school as well as the school responsiveness to their concerns about their children. The parents were more satisfied with the FILDP compared with the previous program. They believed that the strengths of the FILDP reside in many variables such as the teacher/student ratio, the individual attention, the compassionate teacher, the caring environment, the provision of strategies and the self-esteem related issues. However, a few parents expressed regrets in not having greater access to the program, increased attention on homework, more teacher support, and a non split-grade classroom. In total, 92% of parents indicated that the school had been their primary source of help in understanding learning disabilities.

Table 3. Learning Disabilities (LD) Program Review Parent Survey

June 1997. French immersion LD class. n=12 (questions #28 to #32: n=2)

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	undecided or don't know
1. being in the LD program improved my child's academic skills	58.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	0%
2. being in the LD program improved my child's social skills	0%	63.6%	9.1%	0%	27.3%
3. being in the LD program improved my child's self confidence	41.7%	50%	0%	0%	8.3%
4. being in the LD program improved my child's ability to manage his/her learning problem	45.5%	27.3%	0%	0%	27.3%
5. being in the LD program improved my child's understanding of his/her learning problem	41.7%	58.3%	0%	0%	0%
6. being in the LD program improved my child's interest in school	33.3%	50%	0%	0%	16.7%
7. the LD program should be offered only in designated schools	0%	16.7%	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%
8. the LD program should emphasize remediation in language arts and mathematics rather than providing the full program of studies	8.3%	0%	50%	41.7%	0%
9. integration into regular classes is an important component of the LD program	33.3%	50%	0%	8.3%	8.3%
10. most LD students require long term support	9.1%	27.3%	27.3%	9.1%	27.3%
I AM SATISFIED WITH:					
11. the amount my child is learning	33.3%	58.3%	0%	0%	8.3%
12. the help my child receives	58.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	0%
13. the school's responsiveness to my concerns about my child	41.7%	58.3%	0%	0%	0%
14. the teachers' knowledge about learning disabilities	58.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	0%
15. the suggestions on how to help my child at home	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	0%	8.3%
16. my child's involvement in planning his/her own program	33.3%	16.7%	0%	0%	50%
17. my involvement in planning my child's program	25%	41.7%	8.3%	0%	25%
18. the information I receive about my child's performance on formal assessments	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

19. the consideration given to medical reports and information about my child	16.7%	66.7%	8.3%	0%	8.3%
20. help I receive in planning for my child's future	8.3%	83.3%	0%	0%	8.3%
21. the information received about the school and activities	33.3%	58.3%	0%	0%	8.3%
22. the number of students in the class(es)	75%	16.7%	8.3%	0%	0%
23. the amount of aide support	58.3%	25%	0%	8.3%	8.3%
24. the amount of integration	8.3%	50%	0%	0%	41.7%
25. the amount of homework my child has	16.7%	58.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
26. the computers and technology available	0%	58.3%	8.3%	0%	33.3%
27. the transportation arrangements	9.1%	54.5%	0%	9.1%	27.3%

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOW INTEGRATED INTO REGULAR CLASSES answer #28 to #32. If NOT, proceed to # 33 (only 2 parents responded).

I AM SATISFIED WITH

28. the help provided in the regular class(es)	0	0	1	1	0
29. the regular class teachers' knowledge about learning disabilities	1	1	0	0	0
30. the provisions made for my child's learning problems in the regular class(es)	0	0	1	1	0
31. the range of options or courses available for my child	0	0	1	0	1
32. the amount of integration provided	0	0	0	0	2

BEFORE MY CHILD WAS IN THE LD PROGRAM, I WAS SATISFIED WITH:

33. the help my child received in school	0%	16.7%	41.7%	16.7%	25%
34. the school's responsiveness to my concerns about my child	8.3%	50%	25%	0%	16.7%
35. the information I received from the school about my child's learning problems	8.3%	50%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%
36. the knowledge of the teachers regarding LD	8.3%	8.3%	33.3%	25%	25%
37. the information I received from the school about program options for my child	8.3%	58.3%	0%	8.3%	25%
38. the help I received from the school in finding the LD program	16.7%	41.7%	0%	8.3%	33.3%

39. What are the strengths of the LD Program?	40. What would you like to change about the LD Program?
• teacher/student ratio (n=7) • individual attention (n=6) • compassionate teacher (n=4) • caring atmosphere (n=4) • delimitation of deficits and provision of strategies (n=4) • self-esteem and deficits awareness (n=3)	• access (transportation) (n=2) • access (language- French or other) (n=2) • follow-up and increased attention on homework (n=2) • more support to teacher (n=1) • no split-grade classroom (n=1) • concerns regarding services offered after completion of pilot (n=1) • nothing (n=1)

41. What sources have been of the most help to you in understanding learning disabilities and your child's needs?

family member	16.7%
previous school	8.3%
this school	91.7%
medical doctor	8.3%
hospital clinic (e.g., Glenrose, University)	8.3%
association for learning disabilities	8.3%
books or magazine articles	50%
other	33.3%

42. Which, if any, of the following apply to your child:

attention deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity)	33.3%
speech and language problems	33.3%
behaviour problems	25%
on medication for learning or behaviour problems	8.3%

43. If all of the following options were available, which do you think would be best for your child at this time:

to be integrated in a regular classroom with assistance being provided	16.7%
a regular class most of the time with a special class (small group) part of the time	16.7%
a special class most or all of the time	75%
a special school	0%
other:	8.3%

44. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding district programs and services for students with learning difficulties?

- Greater access to learning disabilities program in French immersion schools (n=5)
- Continuation of the program after completion of pilot project (n=1)
- Early intervention for children with a learning disabilities (n=1)
- Increased budget for appropriate staffing levels (n=1)
- Setting up a meeting with parents in order to develop program for children with language and speech problems (n=1)

The Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey For Teachers

As illustrated in Table 4, the teacher and the teacher aide responding to the Learning Disabilities Program Review Survey agreed with the parents with regard to the success of the program. They believed the children made significant progress in academic and non-academic tasks. They indicated that the FILDP was effective in increasing the students' achievement, social skills, ability to manage their problem, understanding of their learning problems and interest in school. They also indicated that the integration of the students into regular classes was an important component of the program. It appears as if teachers would like to see more development opportunities, greater access to technology and teacher assistant support. However, both teacher and teacher aide were satisfied with the resources availability, the access to consultants, the student/teacher ratio and the support from the administration. They also emphasized the need for good attendance, as well as family and administrative support. Interestingly enough, both teachers could not compare the FILDP with other programs offered by the district. They indicated the strenghts of the FILDP in the size of the class, the support of the administration and of the parents. They would like to see more integration, greater access to inservice with other staff working in monolingual LD programs.

Table 4. Learning Disabilities (LD) Program Review Staff Survey
(June 1997) Teacher (T) and teacher assistant (A). FILD program (n=2)

PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	undecided or don't know
1. the LD program is effective in increasing the achievement of the students	A	T			
2. the LD program is effective in increasing the social skills of the students		TA			
3. the LD program is effective in increasing the self esteem of the students	TA				
4. the LD program is effective in increasing the ability of students to manage their learning problems	TA				
5. the LD program is effective in increasing students understanding of their learning problems	TA				
6. the LD program is effective in increasing students interest in school	TA				
7. the LD program should be offered only in designated schools					TA
8. the LD program should emphasize remediation in language arts and mathematics rather than providing the full program of studies			TA		
9. integration into regular classes is an important component of the LD program	TA				
10. most LD students require long term support	A	T			
I AM SATISFIED WITH:					
11. my assignment	TA				
12. the adequacy of my training for this assignment		TA			
13. the number of students in the class(es)	A	T			
14. the amount of teacher assistant support	A		T		
15. support from my principal	T	A			
16. support from other staff in the program	TA				
17. support from other staff in the school (not in the program)	A	T			
18. integration opportunities			TA		
19. parental support	TA				
20. parental involvement		TA			
21. professional development opportunities		A	T		
22. computers and other technology available		A	T		
23. instructional resources available		TA			
24. the access to consultants when needed		TA			
25. the help and information received from consultants		TA			

26. Which of the following groups of LD students do you think should be served by the English LD program: (*check one or more)*

those from a specified geographical area	0
those whose parents prefer this location	0
those who were unsuccessful in other LD sites	0
those who have the most severe or complex learning disabilities	(T)
those who need a more protected environment because of emotional reasons	0
those who are expected to need LD programming for several years	(T)
other (specify)	0

27. The 1996 criteria for LD are:

- Report of academic achievement within the current school year on four of the following academic measures which require the student to write, calculate, or respond orally, and achievement below the 10th percentile on at least two of the areas: reading comprehension, reading decoding or vocabulary, written language, spelling, mathematics. Multiple choice measures may not be used for this category
- Average or above average intellectual ability (IQ 100+) as measured on an individual assessment which is not more than two years old
- Discrepancies among or between cognitive and academic skills
- There must be evidence that the academic delay is not due to lack of schooling, behaviour disorder, sensory or physical handicap, English as a second language, cultural deprivation, or instruction in more than one language
- Reapplication is required every two years to renew eligibility and confirm that the student continues to meet the initial qualification criteria, demonstrates success in the program (through increased skills, willingness to participate, good attendance) and is recommended by the school for continued placement in a learning disabilities centre.

Do you support the criteria? yes TA

- would look at emotional profile of student (T)

28. What, in your opinion, are the critical factors which distinguish students who do well in the program from those who do poorly? (e.g., good attendance, parent support, high verbal IQ, etc.) Would these factors be the same of all students?

- good support (parental, households structure) (TA)
- good attendance (TA)
- emotional stability (T)
- small class (maximum of 2 grades per class) (A)

29. It has been suggested that there should be greater coordination among LD sites. It has been suggested that there be a program coordinator, the cost of which would be shared among sites. What aspects of the program require coordination?

- inservices (T)
- meeting staff working within program (not after school) (T)
- not necessary (A)

30. What are the strengths of your school's LD Program?	31. What would you like to change about your school's LD program?
• size of group (TA) • support at the administration level (TA) • parental support (T) • continuation of French immersion (A)	• allowance for more integration (T) • more district support through inservices, meeting (T) • full time teacher assistant (A)

32. What suggestions or comments do you have regarding other district programs and services for students with learning difficulties (e.g., adaptation program)?

- No or limited knowledge of other district programs (TA)

What Is The Profile Of These Children?

Teacher (ongoing communication)

The teacher involved in the study was asked to note her students' learning characteristics as observed over a one year period. The profile of these children is very similar to any child with learning disabilities. Furthermore, in many ways, it corresponds with the parents' perception of their children's learning characteristics. I have classified the teacher's observations into four categories: 1) Attention and organisation; 2) Language and communication; 3) Classroom behaviours; and 4) Self-esteem.

Attention and organisation

The children:

- Do not pay attention to details;
- Often have attention difficulties;
- Often have difficulties following directions (in both French and English)
- Often have difficulties in planning their work;
- Often lose their school materials;
- Often forget to do their homework;
- Often skip problems when doing their work.

Language and communication

The children:

- use a restricted vocabulary in French;
- Often use very simple sentence structure, especially in French;
- Often forget what they wanted to say;
- Often have difficulty sequencing days of the week; months; seasons; historical events;
- Often make mistakes between b/ d, and p / q both in writing and in reading;
- Often lose their place when reading;
- Often have difficulty transcribing what is on the board;
- Often have difficulty with manual dexterity in printing;

- Often have difficulty remembering oral dictation, especially in French.

Classroom behaviours

The children:

- Often move a lot in the classroom;
- Often answer questions without raising their hands;
- Often interrupt when someone else is speaking;
- Work at a slow pace.

Self-esteem

The children:

- Do not always want to take risks;
- Hold poor self-concepts.

Parent Interviews (January 1997)

A total of 30 categories of meaning units were formed from data obtained from the parents' semi-structured interviews held in January 1997, five months after entering the FILDP. Table 5 presents the first 14 categories which contain a minimum of 10 to 71 meaning units per category. The remaining categories contained a maximum of 1 to 9 meaning units per category, they will not be presented here since they are not representative of all of the parents.

Table 5. Parents' interviews: most frequently cited responses

Categories	n=
Learners' characteristics	71
School related improvement	42
Learners' difficulties	39
Teaching style and teaching quality	37
Children's needs and individual needs	34
Before FILDP	30
Family	30
Extra work	29
School life	15
Resources	15
Awareness of disabilities	13
Best learning environment	13
Parental concerns	12
Children's strengths	11
Comfort	10

Learners' characteristics.

A total of 71 meaning units dealing with the children's learning characteristics were given by parents during the January 1997 interview and in other informal discussions held during the 1996-1997 school year. Those characteristics (see Table 6) were regrouped into four broad categories: 1) Language; 2) School related abilities; 3) Adaptation and self-esteem; and 4) Social and physical characteristics. Most learning characteristics reported by parents could be observed by the teacher in day to day school activites. The parents indicated a variety of difficulties associated with school tasks such as reading, writing, comprehension, attention span and problem solving. They also emphasized social characteristics such as risk taking in non-academic situations, abilities in sports and arts. They discussed self-esteem related issues such as the need to feel secure, difficulties with change, the need for encouragement, sadness and frustration.

Table 6. French Immersion Learning Disabled Students' Characteristics According to Parents

Language	Social and physical characteristics
• reading aloud difficulties (stumbling, pronunciation) • avoidance of reading activities • reading comprehension difficulties (cannot remember what has been read, cannot find the meaning of the words in context) • writing difficulties (letter formation, letter inversion, text organisation) • slow French learners (avoid French speaking in a group, difficulties moving from simple to more complex French)	• social butterfly (very social in non-academic settings such as the playground, day out, after school activities) • risk-taker in non-academic situations (sports and arts-related activities) • good in sports or arts (drawing, creativity) • frequent headaches • complaints of fatigue
School-related abilities	**Adaptation and self-esteem**
• short attention span • difficulty working in large group • difficulty doing small group work • planning difficulties • slow pace • no risk taking (academic related activities) • difficulty in problem-solving • cannot handle more than one or two directives at a time • can succeed in one on one situation • very perspicacious	• difficulties with change • need to feel secure • self-conscious • sensitive • in need of a lot of encouragement • lack confidence in reading, French or writing abilities • sad or unhappy • frustrated

School related improvement.

After only 5 months into the FILDP, parents commented on their children's improvement or the sense that they were doing well in class. Many parents commented on their children's improved reading or new interest for books. They noted that the teacher helped the children to choose a book at "their reading level" and of "interest" to them. They also emphasized the teacher's ability to make the children feel comfortable in whatever they were doing, even reading. As one mother put it: "He's reading books! She has him reading books (with a tone of disbelief)." Parents also described their children's confidence level as being "certainly up," "coming up," and "a lot better." Parents also noticed changes in study habits. Where they used to fight over homework it is not "as difficult " now, the children do not get as frustrated, "ne se fâche plus, elle veut faire ses devoirs (does not get angry anymore, she wants to do her homework)." Again, school-related comments made by the children to their parents were positive: "he is a happy guy, his comments are always pleasant ;" "she is in a really good spirits." Another talked of her daughter now wanting to go to school, "depuis un mois c'est fantastique! (after one month, it is fantastic!)." A few parents also commented on their children not feeling as tired as they had in the past at the end of the school day.

Learners' difficulties.

Parents identified their children's school-related difficulties, talking about uneven performance in math or language (reading, writing). Some also indicated that their children have difficulty processing information and following directions:

> It's that processing of information that I think is his biggest problem. And even some times with directions at home; I'll say 'will you go and get ready for school, you know brush your teeth, wash your face, comb your hair'. That's too many things at once.

Another explained how language difficulties interfered with other subjects:

> With problem solving, he loves math, he's great at math, but when he's given a problem in math he looks at it, and to him it looks like Greek half the time. How do you figure out what to do with this? I know how to add or substract or multiply or whatever, but when you have to read a paragraph and try to figure out what to do with it, that's very difficult for him.

Parents described their children's difficulties as being "épouvantable (horrible)," "terrible," and "frustrating."

Teaching style and teaching quality.

According to the parents, teaching style can have either a positive or negative influence on their children's performance in school. Many parents believed the teacher approach is a trigger to the children's learning disabilities getting out of hand. They made very positive comments about the "wonderful teacher who worked with him "and less positive comments on "a teacher that was probably the worst thing that ever could've happened to him." According to some of the parents, a "wonderful teacher" is a person who does "small group sessions," "gives a lot of encouragements," "tells you the things that you need to work on ,but helps you recognize this," "qui prend le temps d'expliquer (who takes time to explain)," who "is sort of changing her teaching methods according to what works and what doesn't work," who knows that "what works for one child doesn't work for the other" and who does "individual" work with the students on their "individual needs." The less effective teacher "travaille dans les grands groupes (work in large groups)," tells the children they "are stupid...and don't know anything," "criticizes everything," and "never says anything good."

Children's needs and individual needs.

According to all the parents, in order to succeed, the children need smaller classes where they can receive individual attention to meet their "different way" of learning. Parents indicated that their children also needed "a very caring teacher," "individual attention," a teacher "aware of what my son's weaknesses are, so she can focus one on one," a learning environment that is not focused "on competition" but on "trial and error." Some parents also believed that the FILDP provided this type of learning environment where the children's needs were met "on a daily basis " instead of once or twice a week in a resource room where the child "goes through the whole week struggling" in the regular classroom. Most importantly, parents felt that the children feel "equal" in the FILDP. The child "feels equal to everybody in the class;" "nobody laughs at anybody else, because they all have exactly the same program ."

Before FILDP.

Most parents indicated that it was very difficult for their children to attend school prior to the program. The children would make excuses, they would say they were sick, or would be very unhappy. The parents felt the children's difficulties were not satisfactorily addressed in the regular classroom. They reported that their children's school experience was such that they fell behind a little more every day. They also noted their children had increased complaints of "headaches," "stomachaches" and feeling "tired" or "mentally exhausted from trying to keep up;" as one parent put it, they were "fed up trying to keep up."

Family.

Parents reported that their children's difficulties had a negative effect on the whole family relationship where there were struggles to do homework or to get ready to go to school. According to a parent: "C'était terrible, tous les soirs quand c'était le temps des devoirs des leçons c'était terrible,en dernier je me tirais les cheveux! (It was terrible, each night during homework it was terrible, at the end, I was pulling my hair!)."

Extra work.

Parents commented on the extra help their children needed both in and out of school before the FILDP, in order to keep up with the rest of the group. They felt the extra time spent on reading and writing exercises and homework was necessary for their children even though it emphasized the children's difficulties and differences.

The children had received help from a variety of people when they finished kindergarten or at the beginning of grade one. A few children received additional help from their school including individual help from a teacher or from a teacher aide. Four children had received resource room help two or three times a week. However, most parents reported having paid an individual tutor or enrolling their children in a specialized summer program to help them learn to read and write. One child had been in an English reading program outside of school since the end of grade two. This program involved reading exercises for 20 minutes, 6 days a week after an initial intensive training program over a summer.

School life.

According to the parents, since spending time in the FILDP, their children now look forward to going to school because they now have "a real sense of accomplishment" where they "don't break down and cry as much now ." Before "school [was] just something that you have to go to." Prior to the program, children expressed their dislike for school. Each week was a power struggle to get the children to the school. They were having severe difficulties in school-related tasks as well as in social interaction. According to the parents, the children were "falling more and more and more behind," "self-esteem and confidence just dropped," the child had "not a lot of friends and gets hurt easily, " the child had a desperate need to have a friend."

Resources.

Most children in the FILDP had received some kind of support from a private tutor, a teacher or from the resource room prior to the program. The parents felt that in

the resource room, the children had "built a little bit more of that self-esteem" but would still fall behind in school work , for example, "By the end of grade two he was probably further behind than he was at the end of grade one." According to the four parents whose children attended the resource room, the extra help was sporadic and did not allow for full improvement and transfer.

Awareness of disabilities.

Most parents indicated that they knew of their children's difficulties prior to diagnosis but they did not know what LD entailed " Nous savions déjà qu'il avait un problème (we already knew he had problems), on le comparait avec sa soeur...il ne peut pas lire (we compared him with his sister,...he cannot read);" "we realized [in kindergarten] there were certain things he wasn't understanding." For some parents, it was difficult to accept the diagnosis: "we were literally shocked, by the end of that year we had a meeting here and they said 'well, he has a learning disability', and at that point we didn't accept it."

Best learning environment.

According to all parents, the best learning environment for their children is one that is "smaller," that encourages "one on one" interaction between the teacher and the student, that provides children with "more attention," that encourages "trial and error," that provides "un coup de pouce individuellement (a hand)," that "shows enthusiasm" toward students' learning with a teacher who is "motivated."

Parental concerns.

Parents indicated few concerns but the ones they held are nevertheless important. They worried about their children's reaction to the FILDP, the "special class." They also indicated concerns toward the labeling and what others would think of their children: "You have to say to yourself, he seems normal in everyway so why is he labeled, or why does he have to be put in this particular class." A mother of a child with learning disabilities clearly summarized all of the other parents' input:

I think too ... if you tell anybody that your child is in an LD program, they automatically think that there's something wrong with your child, he can't learn. You know, it's sort of hard to explain to people because they don't know about it; they don't really know what it is or what they have to offer, and that these kids have to be bright - number one, but they have to be in the lowest tenth percentile in two areas. They think well, you know, these kids are dumb and they need to be in another class. That's kind of what people think. Which is really unfortunate. And to tell you the truth, maybe before I knew about it too, I would think that kids that are right away put in this program are labeled as being 'non-learners' and you realize that's not the point now. The more I've learned or read about it, the more I understand these children are able to learn, but they are just not able to learn maybe the way all other children, in a normal classroom, are able to learn.

However some parents said that "Now we feel more comfortable because he's feeling comfortable," "we would be stupid not to do nothing but benefit from it [the program]," "I would hate to stop a good thing," "getting my child in that class was the best thing that happened to her," the teacher and the school programs' teaching approaches helped her develop self-esteem."

A few parents also expressed concern regarding full integration of their children after the program. "Would these kids need help continually?," "My only concern is just when they come out of this program, in this case, that he would be grade 6 materials."

Children's strengths.

Parents recognized their children's strengths. They talked about their children being "brillant and perceptive," "fort surtout les mathématiques, la science (good especially in math and sciences)," being good at "drawing" or "writing stories" and doing "sports." And again, what parents did "is to find out what that child's potentials

are. And to work with those and not to work the negative ones and try to push and push."

Comfort.

Parents emphasized the need to feel "comfortable" in the classroom and with the teacher for their children to take risks and learn. When the atmosphere is so positive and caring, there are "no negative connotations of being in a special class" says a mother. In fact some parents believed their children are a little "scared of leaving the social life in the class."

The Children's Most Important Preoccupations: What Are They?

Children's Narratives and Interviews

Ellis' Narrative Interview Schedule (1994) was used during an interview in June 1997. The children responded eagerly to the questions. Their responses indicated that they were preoccupied not only by their learning difficulties and school-related tasks but also by family issues dealing with divorce-related matters and financial security. Family issues were addressed when the students were asked about their worries, their wishes and dreams. Their responses will not be presented here of respect for the privacy of these children. Most children also gave a lot of importance to their family and extended family as well as friendship.

Learning difficulties and school-related issues

If they had more free time, four children said they would spend it doing homework. Two children mentioned people being surprised they had successfully completed school-related tasks. For five children, the most difficult thing they ever had to do was related to school tasks. One child explained why he finds mathematics difficult: "I get, like I get mixed-up with the questions I like go like I'm on number one, and then I get mixed-up with like there's a bottom and top, so there's number one and

number two and I don't know which one I'm working on, so I get mixed-up with that." Another child explained her difficulties with reading (C: child; I: interviewer):

C: Me and the kids in my class we have, like, cover overlays that are different colors : blue, pink, purple, red, blue, yellow, grey, and stuff like that, and this, like, when we put it down on a piece of paper it sort of helps keep the letters in place because like the letter sometimes will like jump around and *has* may look like S, H, A, and that will be sha and that's what happened to me at the beginning of the year, and years before, I'd be trying to read something so it was house it would look like south then, stuff like that.

I: So when you look at your page and you look at the writing what does it do? What happens?

C: Well, like, say I'm trying to figure out one word, everything will go away, and the word will get mixed up and the letters will jump around. So when we have the cover overlay, it's sort of like keeps the letters in place. And sometimes like the green might work, or if say the blue doesn't work well, that means like the letters will still sort of, still be able to get out and jump.

I: So you will try another color then?

C: Yes

I: Is it the same whether it's in French or in English?

C: Yes. But I have more trouble, like even with the cover overlay, I have more trouble in French, probably because I read and it's harder and more like... like the accents, might jump.

When asked who they thought made the biggest difference in the LD classroom the students, the teacher or the principal, nine children answered the students, because of their different learning styles and classroom behaviours. Two children believed it was the

teacher because of the interaction she has with the students, and one child believed it was the principal but was unable to explain why.

When questioned about what was the most important thing in their lives, two children believed the most important thing was to get "a good education." When questioned about what was the best thing about being their age, for four of the children, the best thing was that school was easier in the lower grades than in the higher grades: "All the time when you get in bigger grades it gets harder." For six of the children, the hardest thing about being their age was also related to "going to school" and "doing school work." Three children expressed a desire to be very good in "Maths," "school work," and "French."

When asked about their biggest worry, two children said they would like not to have to worry about school anymore. Three more children indicated that school was their second biggest worry.

When asked what they did to find ideas, seven children explained they had difficulty finding ideas and they needed more time to find what they were looking for: "It takes more time to get the stuff;" "It took me a little while longer to figure it out." To help them find an idea, three children reported that they ask their parents, three look at pictures or into a book, and six children think of their own experience or of something they enjoyed in the past: "I think of something I really like;" "I sometimes take ideas or little parts of ideas off other peoples' work they've done in the past or I put little things together of what I've done in the past."

The children were also asked if they liked to draw or write: eight children emphasized their love of drawing animals, or nature, and four children indicated they like to write about mysteries.

Family, extended family and friendship.

If they didn't have to go to school five days of the week, three of the children would spend more time with their family, and five said they would want to be with their

friends. Ten children believed that family is the most important thing in their life, six children also mentionned friendship as being very important and two children believed that life in itself was what was most important to them. If they could spend 2 weeks with someone who does some kind of special work, five children said they would like to spend this time with a member of their family: uncle, aunt, grand-parents, father, mother. Interestingly enough, four children would like to spend the two weeks with educational professionals: a principal, a teacher, "a math person," and an educational psychologist.

When asked if they had any heros, three children identified their hero among celebrities; three more identified a friend from their school; two children put their faith in their pets and four children said they did not have someone to look up to.

Learning Disabilities Awareness Sessions

An important component of the program consisted of the Learning disabilities awareness sessions (LDAS). Approximately once a week, the children would discuss their worries, strengths and weaknesses, and the use of a strategy during a LDAS. These sessions were animated by the teacher and every child was expected to participate. The aim of these sessions was to better understand learning disabilities, their consequences and ways to work with them. McMurchie's (1994) document explaining how we learn and what learning disabilities or learning differences are was often used during these sessions. For example, when presenting an explanation of learning differences, the children had an opportunity to discuss their specific feelings regarding their own difficulties. Here is a sample: (Teacher = T; Student = S)

Sample 1:

T: OK, I'm going to give you a little hand-out here on what learning difficulties actually are and we're going to read through this together and then we will talk a little bit more about you and particular problems when we get to the end of it.

T: Would anybody like to read... Would you read the first paragraph?

S1: People with learning differences are intelligent, some are very smart. This can be confusing because in schools they might not work up to their intelligence in some

areas because they have learning differences. Their brains sometimes mix up the information
they receive.

T: OK. So, the people with learning differences are smart and some of them are even really smart, like very, very smart but because they have these learning differences sometimes their brain confuses some of the information.

S1: Sometimes I get confused when I read a lot...

S2: I get frustrated...

T: You get frustrated sometimes when you're reading, sure. This sounds kind of familiar, you know who they're talking about, right?

S: Yes (group)

T: Do you want to read the next paragraph?

S: Your brain is like a gigantic file cabinet.

T: Do you know what a file cabinet is?

S: Yes... (group)

T: All the information is stored in files in the drawers. Your learning differences can misplace the files, mix up the files or cause the drawers to get stuck so you can't get the information you are trying to find, but you are not dumb.

S: If you were, your file cabinet would be empty.

T: That's right, it's not that you don't have the information, it's just that the information is there in your brain, but sometimes it's hard for you to go and find it, exactly which information you need when you need it. Sometimes your files are kind of mixed up in your head, sometimes you can't quite get to it, it's like you can't open that drawer to go and get the information that you need. It's inside there somewhere, you know it is, you just lost the key and it's sometimes just gone temporarily and sometimes really gone, you have to start over.

S1: Every person with L. D. is different. Some have a hard time with doing one or two things, some have a hard time doing many things.

T: These are some of the things people with L. D. might have trouble with, see which ones sounds like you. Difficulty with reading, you see that subtitle?

S: Yes... (group)

T: What color is the subtitle in?

S: Dark black... (group)

T: Dark black, so you're following from there on please. So difficulty reading, it means you don't like to read the letters B, D, P, and everyone?

S: Q!!!

T: Often look alike to you. You know a word one time and you forget it the next. Sometimes you skip words or a lines on a page, you need to be looking or you put letter sounds into words that are not there, you get confused when someone asks questions about what you have read. So that would be somebody who has difficulty with reading. Can we listen to (student name)? No, I'll read from now on. (Student name) do you want to say something?

S4: Sometimes, like, you know when the test you gave us today, like if we're practicing, I can do it, but if somebodyís putting it in a test, I get all nervous and stuff, so it's really hard because it's in a test.

T: OK. We did a French test this morning and she had to read a story and answer four or five questions and pick from A, B, C and D, OK. So we've done a lot of exercises like that this year, we've done a lot those reading kinds of things and picking the right answer and that's so it makes it a little bit easier when it's a test, but I know you can still get kind of nervous, that doesn't help. (Student name)?

S5: Sometimes I like get really worried on test because hum... they're tests and if I don't do good I get a bad mark.

T: OK. And for people that have a hard time going to those filing cabinets and finding the information, it's why you're nervous, it's probably even harder to get in there and get the information out, the information is there. (Student name)?

S6: Lots of times in my old school I thought I was dumb. Because I never got chosen; sometimes I was off in my own corner and the teacher never picked me to read or anything.

T: Oh! And you get more of a chance to in this class, right? There are less students, that's right. (Student name)?

S4: Whenever I have a test... hum I got like really nervous and then, and then, hum... when I tried read this. Like, letter, I start worrying too much. I'm just worried that I might fail.

T: So that doesn't help you when you get so nervous does it?

S: No (group)

T: We're going to maybe find ways to relax. I'm going to take one more comment and then we will go on.

S5: My friend, he always put his mind like a filing cabinet.

T: He always what?

S5 . Pictured his mind was a filing cabinet, he pretended that every drawer was like math, science and stuff like that.

T: Oh! And then he could put the right information in the right drawer, so at least he would know where to go and find it. That's a good idea.

Throughout this dialogue, the teacher was able to acknowledge one of her students' needs: a relaxing strategy before taking a test. She was also able to reinforce a reading strategy in pointing to the subheading and the color of that subheading making sure everybody was at the same place and that everybody was able to recognize the topic under discussion. The children were also able to express some of their worries and differentiate between being dumb and being intelligent but having difficulties in certain areas. They were also able to visualize how information is stored in the brain.

A week later, a follow up discussion took place bringing the children one step further in their understanding of their disabilities and differences as well as in their understanding of how we learn. This second sample (Teacher = T; Student = S) reviews prior knowledge (file cabinet analogy) in addition to bringing new concepts (the role of the brain in learning). Once again, the teacher makes sure everyone follow the brain chart comparing it with a map and pointing to the legend at the bottom. She brings them through the chart one point at a time. At the same time, children recognize their difficulties or strenghts in task related area (memory, organization). The conversation happening between the teacher and student 9 is particularly interesting. The child not only recognized her difficulty with retaining verbal information but also her ability to retain similar visual information. The teacher then emphasized to that child the importance of the blackboard for her and why she tried to teach using both verbal and visual stimuli at the same time.

Sample 2:

T: Today we're going to find out a little bit more about how your brain works. So I've got a little pamphlet here that I'm going to give you. On the top of it you have a diagram of your brain.

S: Oh! Cool... (group)

T: We're going to find out how the brain allows everyone to learn. And we're also going to...

S1: Can we use like one of those read, mind reading machines?

T: We're also going to find out what happens if your brain has L. D. ... Learning Disabilities. The important thing to remember is that there is nothing wrong with your brain if you have L. D. it's just...

S2: You just learn in a different way.

T: Exactly, that your brain, you just learn...

S3: You have to... your filing cabinet gets mixed-up or sometimes the doors are locked.

S1: How do they know that this is their brain?

T: How do they know that's the brain? What the brain looks like, do you think you could find an answer for that question? Could (Student name) try and find the answer?

S4: Humm... They cut-off somebodiy's head.

T: I'm sure that they have at some point.

S5: When they're dead after operations or something...

T: So your brain is something like a file cabinet which is exactly what (Student name) said to us. It stores the information, but if you were dumb your filing cabinet would be really empty. There would be nothing in there, there wouldn't be any information. But you know that people with learning differences they have file cabinets that are full of information.

S6: What happens is that sometimes the files get misplaced.

S3: Yes, well...

T: Sometimes you feel as though the files are kind of stuck and you can't get in there and find exactly what your looking for at the right moment.

S5: My files are in order

T: Your files are in good order? That's good.

S7: Same with mine.

S8: Mine are too.

S6: Mine are just...mine are just locked away.

T: O.k. Let's look at the hand-out and answer questions as we go along. So the top here you have a picture what the brain looks like and then do you see the numbers on the brain?

S: Yes. Yes. (group)

T: O.k. Well on the bottom is kind of like a legend, like for a map. So do you see that area number one on your brain?

S: No. Yes. (group)

T: That's the area of your brain responsible for your concentration and your judgement. So your judgement is like the way that you decide to do something or not to do something. Area number two. See that further back.

S: Yes. (group)

T: That's the part that organizes your thoughts.

S9: Humm... That's the messy part of mine.

T: That's the messy part in yours. O.k.

S5: That's the clean part of mine.

T: O.k. Number three, see that shaded area kind of in the middle.

S: Yes. (group)

T: That's the part where you form your sentences, that's the part also...

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... anything that they see, they remember really well.

S9: I can't...

T: Things that they just hear, often is harder for them to remember: So for some people that's a really strong part.

S9: I've got a bad memory.

T: O.k. Is there one part that's better than the other of your memory though (Student name)?

S9: ...

T: Is there something that you see that you remember better than if you just hear it?

S9: If I see it, I can remember it, but if I hear, I might forget and then it sort of clicks and then it goes away.

T: O.k. But the things that you see you tend to remember better? See that's an important thing to know about yourself as a learner you know that you have to really look at me when I'm explaining something on the board. So if you see it on the board, it will stay with you more. Than if you've got your head in your desk and you can just hear my voice. That's why I often try to put things on the board and talk at the same time. So that the people learn really well by hearing will have my voice. I try to do both.

Observation of these sessions as well as classroom observations were not always planned ahead which permitted a better and more valid observation of classroom activities and routine. I knew that the teacher's activities had not been planned on my account. Most children became at ease with me, feeling secure enough to volunteer information on a variety of subjects (hobbies, family, friends, difficulties, worries, etc.). In return, I tried to listen to them with great respect, making myself aware of the complexity of an 8 or 9 year old's daily life. Having the children confide in me eventually made it difficult to report observation data since their testimonies are so intertwined with who they are and how they respond in the classroom. However, I am confident that the observation data provided here as well as in the children's profiles give a good sense of who they were without infringing on their privacy.

Did Children Participating In The FILDP Gain In French Spelling, Comprehension And Word Identification?

The 12 children enrolled in the FILDP were evaluated on their French abilities using three subtests of the Canada French Immersion Achievement Test (F.I.A.T.) (1987) by their teacher. These subtests were spelling, word identification, and passage comprehension. Measures were obtained before entering the FILDP (May to June 1996), in May and June of 1997 and again in January 1998.

The children's percentile ranks are presented in Table 7. Table 8 presents a summary of variation between the first and last measures in percentile ranks. As shown in these two tables, the children's French spelling deteriorated over a year and an half: percentile rank varying from 1 to 50 at entry; between 1 and 55 in June 1998; and between 1 and 31 at last entry (January 1998) for an average lost of -0.9 percentile. However, the F.I.A.T. does get harder when moving grades, which could explain the discrepancy between the second and third administration of the test.

Insert Tables 7 & 8

The children increased their percentile ranks in word identification by an average of 21.1 percent and in passage comprehension by an average of 6.6 percent. These results would indicate that children enrolled in the FILDP have, for the most part, increased their French language abilities. Note that for the first year of the program, more emphasis was placed upon English reading intervention than French reading intervention. The children received less French instruction as it relates to reading and grammar. Scores may have been higher if more intervention time had been given in that area. When looking into the French spelling errors, it is clear that those mistakes were influenced by the English language. Children's mistakes consisted of omitting double consonants and the silent "e" at the end of word; using a "z" instead of an "s"; and using "u" instead of "ou". Incorrect uses of "eau", "au" and "o" were also noted. However, these homophones are difficult aspects of the French language and are often difficult for the immersion student to grasp. Also, note that the program was more effective with grade four students than with grade three students.

Table 7. Percentiles obtained on 3 administrations of the Canada F.I.A.T.

Students	Spelling			Word Identification			Passage Comprehension		
	Before FILDP June 1996	May-June 1997	Jan. 1998	Before FILDP June 1996	May-June 1997	Jan. 1998	Before FILDP June 1996	May-June 1997	Jan. 1998
Grade 3									
1	12	17	31	2	3	15	1	6	10
2	12	2	1	3	1	<1	6	27	2
3	18	11	2	6	1	<1	6	12	6
4	12	7	26	1	1	2	6	12	10
5	N/A	7	26	N/A	<1	42	N/A	21	37
6	4	2	4	9	<1	2	18	6	6
Grade 4									
7	50	31	24	3	43	73	12	6	8
8	5	12	14	1	1	3	6	10	25
9	43	55	29	1	77	82	12	30	13
10	1	1	14	1	1	13	2	2	25
11	24	19	24	6	57	73	12	16	48
12	1	12	14	2	1	2	4	2	5

N/A= data unavailable

Table 8. Summary of percentile rank variation between first and last administration of the Canada F.I.A.T.

Students	Spelling			Word Identification			Passage Comprehension		
	First	Last	Variation	First	Last	Variation	First	Last	Variation
Grade 3									
1	12	31	+19	2	15	+13	1	10	+9
2	12	1	-11	3	<1	-2	6	2	-4
3	18	2	-16	6	<1	-5	6	6	0
4	12	26	+14	1	2	+1	6	10	+4
5	N/A	26	N/A	N/A	42	N/A	N/A	37	N/A
6	4	4	0	9	2	-7	18	6	-12
Improvement			2\6			2\6			2\6
Grade 4									
7	50	24	-26	3	73	+70	12	8	-4
8	5	14	+7	1	3	+2	6	25	+19
9	43	29	-14	1	82	+81	12	13	+1
10	1	14	+13	1	13	+12	2	25	+23
11	24	24	0	6	73	+67	12	48	+36
12	1	14	+13	2	2	0	4	5	+1
Improvement			3\6			5\6			5\6
Average		-0.9			+21.1			+6.6	

N/A= data unavailable

Did Children Participating In The FILDP Gain In English Decoding, Spelling And Reading Comprehension?

A majority of children enrolled in the FILDP were also evaluated by an Edmonton Public psychologist on their English language proficiencies using three subtests of the Kauffman Test of Educational Achievement before entry in the program in February 1996, and again in February 1998 when determining access to regular classrooms or criteria for leaving the program. In order to be admissible to the program, children had to score below the 10th percentile in at least two areas. In order to leave the program and be admissible to a regular French immersion classroom, children have to score at the 25th percentile or higher in all areas (if only one area is below the 25th percentile, a child may be admitted to a regular program). The subtests administered at 2-year intervals were spelling, word identification and passage comprehension. All children's grade equivalences are presented in Table 9. Variations between first and last administration of the Kauffman range from +.9 to + 6.5 grade equivalent. All children gained in all three subtests.

Table 9. Grade equivalent variations between first and last administration of the Kauffman Test of Educational Achievement in English.

Students	Reading Decoding		Spelling		Reading Comprehension	
	Feb. 1996	Feb. 1998	Feb. 1996	Feb. 1998	Feb. 1996	Feb. 1998
Grade 3						
1	N/A	4.2	N/A	3.2	N/A	5.8
2	N/A	2.8	N/A	1.9	N/A	2.2
3	1.3	2.3 (+1.0)	2.1	3.2 (+1.1)	<1	1.9 (+0.9)
4	N/A	2.9	1.4	2.7 (+1.3)	N/A	3.6
5	N/A	3.8	N/A	4.8	N/A	5.4
6	1.3	2.1 (+0.8)	1.2	2.1 (+0.9)	<1	3.3 (+2.3)
Grade 4						
7	N/A	4.8	N/A	4.6	2.3	4.6 (+2.3)
8	2.0	4.6 (+2.6)	1.5	3.0 (+1.5)	1.8	8.3 (+6.5)
9	2.0	5.3 (+2.3)	N/A	4.6	2.8	5.2 (+2.4)
10	N/A	3.6	N/A	3.7	N/A	4.6
11	2.6	5.3 (+2.7)	2.4	5.2 (+2.8)	4.1	8.3 (+4.2)
12	2.3	4.2 (+1.9)	1.7	3.7 (+2.0)	2.6	6.5 (+4.9)

N/A: Four children were assessed using Wechsler Individual Achievement Test or the WRAT depending on the school where they were initially identified as LD. Their scores on the three subtests ranged between 1%ile and 2%ile (grade 3 students) and between 1.9 and 2.4 grade equivalent (grade 4 students).

The children were also assessed by their teacher using all subtests of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in English in October 1996 and again in October 1997. Tables 10 and 11 present the third grade children's grade equivalent in both years as well as total grade equivalent variation for that one year period for all subtests. Tables 12 and 13 present the same results for grade four students. These scores indicate that grade 3 students gained an average grade equivalent of 0.95 (in spelling) to 1.47 (in maths concepts) in a one year period in all areas except capitalization, where the average loss was -0.12 grade equivalent. Grade four students improved in all areas with an average grade equivalent gained ranging from 0.9 (in math computation) to 1.95 (in vocabulary).

Table 10. Grade equivalent for grade three students using the CTBS

Students	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	96	97	96	97	96	97	96	97	96	97	96	97
Vocabulary	1.5	4.4	1.7	2.1	2.2	3.7	2.0	3.6	2.6	4.4	2.4	3.6
Spelling	1.9	3.0	1.6	1.9	2.6	3.6	1.4	2.7	2.1	3.6	1.6	2.1
Capitalization	3.1	2.1	2.9	2.5	2.9	4.0	2.4	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.3
Punctuation	2.6	2.0	2.4	2.6	2.1	3.6	2.6	5.0	3.9	5.4	2.6	3.6
Usage and expression	2.1	3.4	2.2	2.2	1.3	2.6	1.9	3.4	1.6	4.7	1.9	2.4
Visual materials	2.6	3.5	1.9	2.8	2.3	3.5	2.3	3.6	1.9	4.8	1.8	2.5
Reference materials	2.5	3.3	2.5	3.9	3.1	3.8	2.7	3.2	2.4	4.5	2.4	3.0
Math concepts	2.1	3.8	1.6	2.7	2.3	3.2	2.4	4.1	2.6	5.2	2.1	2.9
Math problems	1.8	4.0	2.4	2.9	2.2	2.5	2.2	4.1	2.4	5.2	2.2	2.0
Math computation	2.7	3.4	2.7	4.3	3.1	4.2	3.0	3.9	3.0	6.0	3.0	3.2

Table 11. Total grade equivalent changes for grade three students using the CTBS between 1996-1997.

Subtests	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
Vocabulary	+2.9	+0.4	+1.5	+1.6	+1.8	+1.2	+1.57
Spelling	+1.1	+0.3	+1.0	+1.3	+1.5	+0.5	+0.95
Capitalization	-1.0	-0.4	+1.1	+0.1	-0.1	-0.4	-0.12
Punctuation	-0.6	+0.2	+1.5	+2.4	+1.5	+1.0	+1.0
Usage and expression	+1.3	0	+1.3	+1.5	+3.1	+0.5	+1.28
Visual materials	+0.9	+0.9	+1.2	+1.3	+2.9	+0.7	+1.32
Reference materials	+0.8	+1.4	+0.7	+0.5	+2.1	+0.6	+1.0
Math concepts	+1.7	+1.1	+0.9	+1.7	+2.6	+0.8	+1.47
Maths problems	+2.2	+0.5	+0.3	+1.9	+2.8	-0.2	+1.25
Math computation	+0.7	+1.6	+1.1	+0.9	+3.0	+0.2	+1.25

Table 12. Grade equivalent for grade four students using the CTBS

Students	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	96	97	96	97	96	97	96	97	96	97	96	97
Vocabulary	2.6	5.0	3.1	5.5	3.8	5.1	3.1	5.4	3.6	5.6	3.7	5.0
Spelling	2.7	3.8	2.1	4.4	2.8	4.2	2.1	3.8	2.8	4.9	2.7	4.0
Capitalization	2.8	3.8	4.2	4.0	3.9	5.8	2.5	4.9	2.8	4.9	2.1	4.0
Punctuation	2.6	4.5	5.0	5.8	2.9	4.5	3.6	3.9	5.0	6.2	3.6	4.5
Usage and expression	2.8	3.2	2.4	5.6	2.1	4.9	3.4	3.8	3.7	4.9	2.2	5.3
Visual materials	2.4	3.0	3.0	4.8	4.1	6.0	3.1	4.5	3.6	6.0	3.5	5.5
Reference materials	2.9	3.6	3.5	4.5	4.0	5.5	4.1	5.1	2.8	6.0	2.8	5.9
Math concepts	2.9	5.2	4.1	6.1	4.8	5.8	3.6	3.9	4.6	6.5	3.8	5.6
Math problems	2.7	4.7	4.3	5.6	4.7	4.9	4.0	4.7	4.7	6.4	3.8	5.2
Math computation	3.2	4.7	4.9	5.2	4.7	5.5	3.6	4.9	4.9	5.4	4.2	5.2

Table 13. Total grade equivalent changes for grade 4 students using the CTBS between 1996-1997.

Subtests	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
Vocabulary	+2.4	+2.4	+1.3	+2.3	+2.0	+1.3	+1.95
Spelling	+1.1	+2.3	+1.4	+1.7	+2.1	+1.3	+1.65
Capitalization	+1.0	-0.2	+1.9	+2.4	+2.1	+1.9	+1.52
Punctuation	+1.9	+0.8	+1.6	+0.3	+1.2	+0.9	+1.12
Usage and expression	+0.4	+3.2	+2.8	+0.4	+1.2	+3.1	+1.85
Visual materials	+0.6	+1.8	+1.9	+1.4	+2.4	+2.0	+1.68
Reference materials	+0.7	+1.0	+1.5	+1.0	+3.2	+3.1	+1.75
Maths concepts	+2.3	+2.0	+1.0	+0.3	+1.9	+2.8	+1.27
Math problems	+2.0	+1.3	+0.2	+0.7	+1.7	+1.4	+1.22
Math computation	+1.5	+0.3	+0.8	+1.3	+0.5	+1.0	+0.9

How Do FILDP Students Compare With Students In The Regular English Learning Disabilities Program?[1]

Edmonton Public Schools conducted English language measures throughout the study using the Highest Level of Achievement Test (HLAT), a district assessment package that is administered to all students from grades 1 to 9. There are two components in the HLAT: 1) a reading comprehension measure (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) administered every year to every student; and 2) a written language measure where a writing prompt is given. The written language measure is locally developed, and schools are provided with a guide to help them determine both grade level and quality of writing. This measure is only administered in grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 because the students write provincial language arts exams in grades 3, 6, and 9.

As indicated in Tables 14, 15, and 16, students in the FILDP showed substantial growth on English language measures using the HLAT. The majority of students gained two grades in reading comprehension and the others gained one grade between 1996 and 1997 administrations of the district HLAT. FILDP students achieved as well or better than a comparison group of French Immersion students who entered the English-only LD program in 1996. For that same year, results from the 1996 review of the district English-only LD programs including 235 students indicated that 2% of the students had a loss of 1 grade, 19% had no change, 48% increased 1 grade, 28% increased 2 grades and 3% increased 3 grades as measured by the HLAT reading. Because HLAT writing measures are not given in grade 3, data comparing 1996 and 1997 is unavailable for this group of students, as none had scores for both years.

Tables 14, 15, and 16 summarize achievement gains made by the students in the FILDP. For comparative purposes, information is provided for a sample of seven

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[1] English measures obtained with the HLAT were provided by the Edmonton Public School District. EPS conducted all of the assessments and gave me access to the results.

students who transferred from a French Immersion Program into an English LD program for the 1996-97 school year.

Table 14. Change in HLAT reading grades between 1996 and 1997 for students in their first year of the learning disabilities program

	n	Loss of 1 grade	No change	Increase of 1 grade	Increase of 2 grades
French Immersion LD Program	10			40%	60%
English LD Program Previously French Immersion	7			71%	29%

Table 15. Grade level on HLAT reading after 1 year in the learning disabilities program

	n	3 grades below	2 grades below	1 grade below	at grade level	1 year above
French Immersion LD Program	11			18%	82%	
English LD Program previously French Immersion	7			57%	29%	14%

Table 16. Grade level on HLAT writing after 1 year in the learning disabilities program

	n	2 grades below	1 grade below	at grade level	1 year above
French Immersion LD Program	4			100%	
English LD Program Previously French Immersion	5		60%	40%	

Summary and Overall Performance

In the first year of the study, September 1996 to June 1997, the program included 13 students in a self-contained classroom. During that year, all students received their instruction in that classroom. The four major components of the program were:

1. Strategy instruction based on each child's needs with a strong emphasis on organisation, study habits, peer assisted learning, problem-solving, and proof-reading strategies;
2. Weekly LD Awareness session;
3. English reading intervention using the Early Reading Intervention Program, flashcards, Lindamood Auditory Discrimination, phonics, dictations and reading aloud;
4. Emphasis on communication between school and home including an introduction for the parents to the program, a review of the strategies used in class, suggestions on how the parents could maintain strategy use in the home as well as encouragement to ask any questions they might have throughout the program.

In the second year of the program (September 1997 to June 1998), one student moved to another city. The remaining 12 students were all integrated for regular programming for music and 6 were also integrated for mathematics. The language of instruction in the FILDP classroom remained French and more time was allotted for French reading intervention. Components of the program were:

1. Strategy instruction based on each child's needs;
2. Weekly LD Awareness session;
3. French reading intervention;
4. Emphasis on communication between school and home.

After completion of an admissibility assessment conducted in February 1998, 6 children (two from the initial grade 3 class and four from the initial grade 4 class) are going back to a regular French immersion program in September of 1998 due to their major improvement in academic subjects as indicated under section 6, 7 and 8 of this chapter. One child will be going to an English-only Learning Disability Program and one child is leaving the city. The remaining 4 children will stay in the FILDP program for another year with partial integration in different subjects (depending on each child's level of achievement).

The results presented in this chapter indicated that the parents, the teacher and the teacher aide, as well as the students, are satisfied with the outcomes of the FILDP. All participants indicated an increase in the children's achievement as well as in their self-concept. They also reported gains in confidence level and in the children's abilities to manage their learning difficulties. Furthermore, students enrolled in the FILDP achieved as well or better than their peers in an English-only learning disability program and as well or better than students who transferred from a French immersion program into an English-only learning disabilities program.

CHAPTER V

Discussion And Conclusion

What Is The Child's Perception Of His/Her Schooling Experience In The Edmonton Public French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program (FILDP)?

The results indicated that the FILDP was a very good experience. The children's self-image has moved from a perception of being "scared," "stupid," incapable and "out of control" to one of a "sense of control," being more knowledgeable, aware and having a sense of well being. This change alone may result in a better learning disposition and attention capacities (Goupil, 1990; 1997). In turn, a more positive attitude toward learning and increased attention will enhance self-perception (Goupil, 1990; 1997). In itself, the improved self-image of these children is a successful outcome of the FILDP. Furthermore, in regard to self-worth theory (Schunk, 1991), "research shows that perceived ability bears a strong positive relationship to students' expectations for success, motivation, and achievement" (Eccles & Wigfield, cited in Schunk, 1991, p.243). Applied to this case, it may be that the children's high effort led to some success which produced the perception of ability and therefore greater expectations for success, motivation, and achievement. And as explained by Hendrick, Schwartz and Seedfeldt (1993), "Competence grows when children feel successful enough to keep trying and to risk challenges" (p.70).

What Are Parents' Perceptions Of Their Children's Schooling Experience Prior To Entry And After One Year In The FILDP?

According to the parents, the children have gained a lot of control over their disability and are now more able to be active learners. They are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and not as afraid of failing as before. Interestingly enough, awareness and understanding of chronic pain have been shown to be helpful for patients to gain

control and acceptance of their chronic condition (Gross Rehabilitation Centre, 1997). Once patients know what is "bothering" them, they are better able to act upon it and work within acceptable limits of their capacities. In fact, a review of research concerning psychosocial adaptation to a variety of chronic illnesses and disabilities, conducted by Livneh and Antonak (1997), indicated that a number of phases go along with adaptation to a chronic illness. One of these phases, the 'acknowledgment' " is regarded as the first indication that the person has cognitively reconciled with...or accepted the permanency of the condition and the future implications stemming from the chronic illness or disability" (p.22). It is during this phase the individual assimilates the limitation resulting from the illness or disability. It is also during this phase that the individual builds

> a new cohesive self...the person who reaches this state (1) reestablishes a positive self-worth, (2) realizes the existence of remaining and newly discovered potentialities, (3) actively pursues and implements social and vocational goals, and (4) successfully overcomes obstacles encountered during the course of pursuing these goals" (p. 22).

For children with a disability, it might be that the understanding and knowledge (or 'acknowledgment') of their condition is a good starting point with regards to goal setting, self perception, effective strategy use and acceptance of the disabling conditions. Chronic illness and disability, even if different in nature, "are common experiences in the lives of many individuals" (Livneh & Antonak, 1997, p.26). Recent research conducted by Chamberland (1998) indicated that adults with learning disabilities who were given information on their condition showed increased self-concept, greater self-affirmation, increased engagement toward learning, more realistic goal setting and self-acceptance. Similarly, Karp (1998) indicated that post-secondary students' knowledge and acceptance of their learning disabilities led to better school-related attitudes and self-affirmation.

Knowledgeable post-secondary students "arriveront ainsi à mieux se comprendre et assumeront la responsabilité de défendre leurs propres intérêts" (p.15). In the case of the FILDP students, this awareness was primarily gained by the "learning disability awareness sessions" held by the teacher where children were encouraged to discuss their fears, feelings, success and questions regarding their difficulties. The sessions not only developed a good knowledge of what a learning disability is but also increased metacognitive awareness of each child's learning styles, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. As we know, metacognitive awareness is an important factor in developing autonomous and active learners (Lafortune & Saint-Pierre, 1996; Tardif, 1992). It is now well-documented that three types of variables influence metacognition: learner variables, task variables, and strategy variables (Schunk, 1991). Through the learning disability awareness session children were encouraged to discuss learner's related topics. However, task and strategy variables were introduced during instruction time where each child's learning strategy was adapted in function of his/her needs accordingly with his/her own learner's variables.

According to one parent, the development and "understanding of her child's difficulties, has reduced the stress and tension levels by quite a bit." The program "helped her understand what the problem is and how she can deal with it. She is not stupid, she just learns differently." The children will now "talk to friends and family about being in an LD program and feel comfortable in doing this" as well as recognizing they are not "the only one with difficulties" and that it is "all right." In other words, the children learned to discriminate between being "stupid" and having difficulties in certain areas and strengths in others.

Parents also talked of a positive classroom atmosphere: they use the term "free communication" where mistakes are allowed. We know classroom climate is important in the learning process (Lafortune & Saint-Pierre, 1996; Moore, cited in Harmin, 1961; Schunk, 1991). To promote effective thinking, Moore (cited in Harmin, 1961)

recommended "the use of a relaxed, supportive climate in which children feel free and secure" (p.28). The amount of research on the role of classroom climate in the learning process has increased tremendously in the past 10 years (Marzano, 1992). Marzano distinguishes two views of the classroom climate. In one case, the class is described in terms of external factors such as "resources available and the physical environment of the classroom" (p.20). The second view is voiced in terms of internal factors such as attitudes and perceptions of the learners. "If students have certain attitudes and perceptions, they have a mental climate conductive to learning" (Marzano, 1992, p.20). According to Marzano, a sense of acceptance and one of comfort influence one's mental climate. Children need to be accepted by the teacher and their peers as well as feel comfortable in the physical arrangement and affective tone of the classroom. In the FILDP, children seem to meet both internal and external factors to insure a safe learning environment. They expressed a more positive attitude toward themselves, in addition to appreciating a well designed program in which resources are easily accessible.

Are The Teachers, And Parents Satisfied With The Edmonton FILDP And In What Ways?

At this point, after one full year into the program, all parties seem to be satisfied with the FILDP program. As indicated earlier, the children felt they had improved in academic and non-academic tasks. They now have a much more positive attitude toward themselves and learning. Parents also believed that in addition to making a gain in self-confidence, they have acquired knowledge and control over the learning disabilities. They are now more able to take action and by doing so are more receptive to learning. Parents are unanimous in their view that "the program is excellent;" it "has been a very positive experience." This in itself is a great success. In previous studies (Bourassa-Tremblay, 1992; Campbell, 1992) parents reported the lack of resources available for immersion students with learning difficulties.

What Is The Profile Of These Children?

Both parents and teacher input allowed for a description of the French immersion students with learning disabilities. These descriptive checklists have not yet been validated. However, it is a good starting point in the early identification of children in need of a more structured educational program. As pointed out by Rogers and Pratten (1996), early intervention "is more likely to be provided in an integrated mainstream programme, whereas waiting until the child's needs are obviously desperate would increase the likelihood of a segregated special school placement" (p.78). The descriptive checklists are also the first lists of characteristics that take into consideration the French language component of the child's schooling experience as perceived by the parents and the teacher. The parents' and the teacher's checklists are more precise and complete than Demers' (1994) 12 characteristics of a child who may or may not succeed in French immersion which was based on his own classroom experience working with children. In order to be used as a screening tool, both checklists will need to be validated with French immersion students. A first step in this direction has already been taken by Rousseau and d'Entremont (1998).

The Children's Most Important Preoccupations: What Are They?

Even though the children are concerned with their school-related experiences, they clearly expressed the importance of their families as well as the difficult situations they are placed in when facing crises such as divorce. Even though the aim of this study was not to investigate the family climate or situation, it appears that a large proportion of children with learning disabilities face similar problems. In researching the efficacy of a program aimed at the parents of the learning disabled child, Potvin, Hébert and Papillon (cited in Rousseau, Papillon & Paquin 1996) indicated that "les problèmes intrafamiliaux de toutes sortes sont fréquemment observés dans ces familles" (p.20). The authors observed the parents'difficulty of maintaining a good learning climate in the home and

the tendency of parents to isolate themselves from other parents. Royer (1992, cited in Rousseau et al., 1996) claims that "Malgré leur bonne volonté et leur désir de s'impliquer, ces parents ne sauraient pas quoi faire concrètement pour venir en aide à leur enfant" (p.22). The research results of Rousseau et al. indicated that after one year in the MESEM program, an intervention program aimed at the parents whose children have difficulties, the parents did not perceive increased educational competence in their children. However, the children whose parents participated in the MESEM program showed an increased self-concept. Contrary to Rousseau et al.'s study, the FILDP, primarily aimed at the children enrolled in the program, showed that the parents's perception of their children's abilities have increased. The parents' component of the FILDP may have contributed to the children increased positive self-perception. It is clear that a solid communication between the school and the home is crucial to the children's educational intervention in the FILDP or in any other program.

Did Children Participating In The FILDP Gain In French And English Abilities?

Children enrolled in the FILDP gained in French passage comprehension and word identification. In other words, they are now better able to read and understand French. Therefore, it can be said that the FILDP was beneficial to the development of children's French abilities, which is the aim of any immersion program. However, a slight loss was observed in French spelling. As written language is one of the hardest components of the FI program, one should not be overly concerned with this result. The loss may have been caused by the fact that the reading intervention was conducted mainly in English in the first year of the program with less attention devoted to French reading intervention and little attention to French spelling. Also, with changing grades, the F.I.A.T. was harder. The children's English performance also increased significantly. Similarly with the French measures, children made the highest gain in English comprehension, followed by reading decoding. Important gains were also noted in

spelling. This indicates that being in the FILDP did not, in any way, have a negative effect on the English language skills of the students. Other measures such as the use of visual material or reference material indicated remarkable improvement. These results may be attributed to the children's strategy instruction they received throughout the program. However, one should note that higher gains were made by grade four students than by grade three students in all measures. Maturity and/or readiness may have been the reasons for such difference. In fact, in 1981, Trites believed that "children who fail when placed in a Primary French-immersion program appear to have a maturational lag in the temporal-lobe regions of the brain" (p.64). Trites explained that the temporal lobes "are important brain structures for auditory perceptual abilities as well as for verbal and non-verbal perceptual and memory functions" (p.64). However, in his study, Trites did not believe that children with difficulty in immersion had a specific learning disability. He attributed the failure in French immersion to the maturational lag only. Interestingly enough, he states that this lag would only be apparent prior to age 9 and that children "would be able to make completely satisfactory progress if immersed at Grade 3 or 4, or later" (p.64). The actual research results indicate that Trites' hypothesis may warrant more investigation to determine whether or not the higher gains made by the grade 4 students are attributable to the maturational lag hypothesis.

How Do FILDP Students Compare With Students in the Regular English Learning Disabilities Program?

FILDP students achieved as well or better than a comparison group of French Immersion students who entered the English-only LD program in September 1996. Even though the sample was small, these results suggest that transferring a child from French immersion to an English-only program may not always be the best solution. Children with a good grasp of their first language and who desire to continue their schooling in French immersion should be offered a LD program in an immersion context. Between

1996 and 1997, 4 out of 10 FILDP children increased their performance by one grade compared to five out of seven students who were moved from a FI to an English LD program. During the same time frame, 6 out of 10 FILDP children increased their performance by two grades compared to 2 out of 7 transfer students. These results alone emphasize that children with learning disabilities will not necessarily perform better when switched into an English LD program or into a regular English only program. Furthermore, the FILDP group did as well as the English-only LD program (for students who were never registered in FI) where the increase of one grade represents 48% of the English-only LD students and the increase of two grades totals 28% of the English-only LD students.

The LD Awareness sessions combined with a small student-teacher ratio, a good parent-teacher communication, and trial and error strategy instruction are probably factors contributing to the success of the FILDP. But also, by staying in the immersion program, children did not have to go through a loss in self-esteem and self-confidence. Previous studies by Cummins (1984) and Bruck (1979) suggested that transferring the child from immersion to a regular English program could affect the child's self-esteem with feelings of frustration and unhappiness. In transferring programs at grade 4 or earlier, children with learning disabilities not only have to adapt to a new program with new classmates and often a new school, but they also have to catch up with the regular English curriculum which is more advanced than the immersion one in the first years of schooling (French immersion students must have a certain mastery of the French language before moving on to more difficult subjects and concepts). Under those conditions, the FI students transferring to a regular English program are faced with a double challenge that may be discouraging: 1) the students must adapt to a new situation in a new environment; and 2) the students must catch up with the English curriculum. In this view, if one prefers to switch from immersion to a regular English program, the transfer should occur in the early grades (end of grade one at the latest) or in the higher

grades (by the end of grade five) at a time where the immersion children have covered essentially the same curriculum as the English only students.

Conclusion

After one year into the FILDP, all participants are very much satisfied with the efficacy of the program. The children gained confidence, control and strategies to help their performance on academic and non-academic tasks. The parents are pleased to see their children doing better in school and gaining a more positive self-image. The teacher and teacher aide are also encouraged by the results, recognizing in the FILDP an effective program for immersion children facing learning disabilities. The February 1998 assessment indicates major gains in French and English language for a majority of grade four children and some grade three students. Two descriptions of the children's characteristics were created based on the parents' and teachers' comments. These two tools should be further studied in order to develop a valid screening checklist for immersion students. Interviews with the parents related how difficult they felt French immersion and the whole schooling experience was prior to the FILDP. They felt alone and had difficulties understanding the reasons behind their children's poor school performance. According to the parents, the program also had a good influence on the home atmosphere in general. Finally, the comparison between the FILDP and an English program for former FI students suggests that transferring a child from immersion to a regular English or English LD program may not always be the best solution. Upon availability, a FILDP should be seen as an option of choice as long as the children have good mastery of their first language and wish to stay in the immersion stream.

Epilogue

Based on the results of this research and on Edmonton Public Schools' own quantitative study, on February 11th 1998, the Edmonton Public Board of Trustees

approved the FILDP as an ongoing district program, as long as there are sufficient students to warrant its existence. The School Board expects to have 2 classes in the 1998-1999 school year. In order to be admissible to the program, French immersion students will have to meet certain criteria, depending on whether they are newly admitted students or continuing students (see appendix I).

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Appendix A

Edmonton Public School Board Guidelines : Eligiblity Documentation

ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION 1996-97
MODERATE SPECIAL NEEDS
LEARNING DISABILITIES (Code 31, Level 5)

EPS NUMBER _____

LEGAL NAME _____

BIRTHDATE (DD/MM/YY) _____

SCHOOL NAME _____ GRADE _____

Report scores for all areas below. Eligibility requires scores below the 10%ile in at least two academic areas.
Specify measures used and date of test. Measures which require written or oral responses are required.
Do not use multiple choice measures.

READING COMPREHENSION Test	Date	%ile
READING DECODING/VOCABULARY Test	Date	%ile
WRITTEN LANGUAGE Test	Date	%ile
SPELLING Test	Date	%ile
MATHEMATICS Test	Date	%ile

INTELLECTUAL ABILITY: Report total score and subtest scores.
Eligibility requires full scale IQ 100+ on an individual measure administered in English during past two years.

WECHSLER Date

Full Scale _____ I ____ PC ____
S ____ CD ____
Verbal _____ A ____ PA ____
V ____ BD ____
Perf _____ C ____ OA ____
DS ____ SS ____
MZ ____

OTHER TEST:

Date

Scores

1. Does the student meet the criteria for ESL? _____ If yes, provide evidence the student is fluent in English.
2. Has the student ever been in French immersion? _____ A bilingual program ? _____
If yes, refer to explanatory notes for information regarding lack of English reading and writing instruction.

OFFICE USE: MEETS CRITERIA YES ___ NO ___ DATE _____ STAFF _____ ENTERED 1 2

ELIG 95/96 _____ LVL _____ ELIG 96/97 _____ LVL _____ ELIG 97/98 _____ LVL _____

Revised 01/96

ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION 1996-97
LEARNING DISABILITIES

CHARACTERISTICS OF BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING
Compared with others the same age, this student:

Section A ADD

1. often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
2. often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
3. often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
4. often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish school work or chores (not due to oppositional behaviour or failure to understand instructions)
5. often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
6. often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort
7. often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g., toys, pencils, books, tools)
8. is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
9. is often forgetful in daily activities

Section B (ADHD)

1. often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
2. often leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected
3. often runs about or climbs excessively in situations where it is inappropriate (in adolescents may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness)
4. often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly
5. is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor"
6. often talks excessively
7. often blurts out answers before questions have been completed
8. often has difficulty awaiting turn
9. often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games)

Section C Op. Def.

1. often loses temper
2. often argues with adults
3. often actively defines or refuses to comply with adults' requests or rules
4. often deliberately annoys people
5. often blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehaviour
6. is often touchy or easily annoyed by others
7. is often angry and resentful
8. is often spiteful or vindictive

Section D Self -

1. relates poorly to peers; may be socially inept and always on fringe of group
2. poor self-esteem and self-concept
3. lacks judgment
4. has difficulty analyzing other people's feelings, cannot interpret facial expressions of anger, joy, sadness
5. has difficulty analyzing his or her own feelings
6. has few friends
7. overly dependent

Section E Conduct D.

1. often bullies, threatens, or intimates others
2. often initiates physical fights
3. has used a weapon that can cause serious physical harm to others (e.g., a bat, brick, knife, gun)
4. has been physically cruel to people
5. has been physically cruel to animals
6. has stolen while confronting a victim (e.g., mugging, purse snatching, extortion)
7. has forced someone into sexual activity
8. has deliberately engaged in fire setting with the intention of causing serious damage
9. has deliberately destroyed others' property (other than by fire setting)
10. has broken into someone else's house, building or car
11. often lies to obtain goods or favors or to avoid obligations (i.e., "cons" others)
12. has stolen items of nontrivial value without confronting a victim (e.g., shoplifting, forgery)
13. often stays out at night despite parental prohibitions, beginning before age 13
14. has run away from home overnight at least twice while living in parental or parental surrogate home
15. often truant from school

Section F LD Char. (Average)

1. frequently confuses directions, both oral and written
2. forgets assignments and homework
3. forgets belongings - books, coats, pencils
4. needs instructions explained for each assignment
5. works very slowly or rushes through carelessly
6. can't plan studies and assignments
7. sloppy and disorganized book work
8. has difficulty beginning or completing tasks
9. lacks flexibility and is upset when routine

Section G LD Char. (Language)

1. poor verbal expression; language is jumbled and shows poor usage of syntax and semantics
2. literal interpretation of language; misses nuances of meaning; does not understand jokes and riddles
3. trouble relating a story or incident
4. does not transfer knowledge or strategies from between contexts
5. needs specific cues or prompts to remember content or strategies
6. requires a great deal of review in order to acquire new knowledge
7. lack of variety in sentence structure
8. seldom uses topic sentences in paragraph

Section H

1. confuses letters that are similar in appearence (e.g., b-d)
2. confuses letter order in reading and spelling words
3. loses place while reading, skips lines or has to use finger or marker to follow line
4. has difficulty with sequence in repeating a story heard or read
5. makes many mistakes while copying from the blackboard
6. produces written work that is not very legible
7. writes off the line

BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS

Section A ____/9 Section B ____/9 Section C ____/8 Section D ____/7

Section E ____/15 Section F ____/9 Section G ____/8 Section H ____/7

The student:
____ has good attendance
____ is on medication to control behaviour
____ has other disabilities (specify) below
____ is motivated to do well
____ is under psychological or psychiatric care

EXPLANATORY NOTES - LEARNING DISABILITIES

Eligibility for the learning disabilities category is restricted to district centres. Students who meet the eligibility criteria but are not attending a district centre have the learning disabilities eligibility removed, and the school does not receive a learning disabilities allocation. Criteria include above average intellectual ability, discrepancies in performance with both strengths and weaknesses evident, and minimal, if any, difficulties with attendance and behaviour.

Learning Disabilities eligibility is effective for a two year period. All students in the second year of eligibility must be reviewed, and new eligibility documentation submitted for any student who is not returning to regular eligibility. A new request can be submitted for a student who is currently, or was previously, in learning disabilities programming.

Academic measures must require the student to write, calculate or respond orally as they provide better diagnostic information for both identification and instruction than do multiple choice tests. Academic achievement delay should be reported in percentile scores and academic information must be from the current school year, as performance on standardized achievement tests is expected to change markedly over time. Report scores for all areas assessed, including those in which the student scores above the 10th percentile. Intellectual ability measures which are not more than two years old are required. Individual measures are required, and subtest scores must be reported.

Some students may be eligible for both Learning Disabilities and Adaptation, and if they are, both categories will be coded. Students identified for Learning Disabilities programming are expected to be able to develop the skills necessary to enable them to return to regular programming after one or two years in a district centre, whereas Adaptation students experience an academic delay which is frequently more severe and there are not restrictions on behaviour. Adaptation eligibility is not restricted to students in specified district centres. Most students with adaptation eligibility are found to require programming assistance for longer than two years.

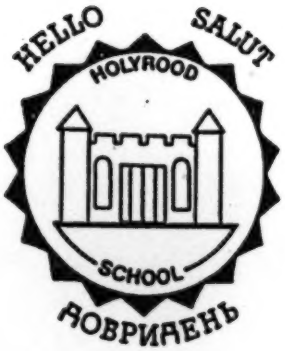
A student whose academic delay is associated with lack of fluency in English is not eligible for Learning Disabilities. A student for whom English is not a first language will be considered for Learning Disabilities under the following conditions:

- The student is fully fluent in oral English and has no difficulty in either speaking or understanding at a level appropriate for chronological age;
- The student's full scale I.Q. score is above 100, with the verbal score above 90 on an individual intelligence measure which is administered completely in English and which includes all subtests rather than a short-form version.

Students who have not had instruction in English reading and writing cannot be expected to achieve on measures of English reading and writing which are normed on students who have had all of their instruction in English. Students in immersion and bilingual programs who qualify for Learning Disabilities typically have pervasive learning difficulties in both languages of instruction. Achievement in both languages should be documented.

Appendix B

Description of the study and consent form



HOLYROOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

7920 - 94 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6C 1W4
Phone: 466-2292 466-2608

September 9, 1996

Dear Parents,

You are aware that the Holyrood Learning Disabilities class for French Immersion students is a pilot project approved by the Edmonton Public School Board. In order to assess and to speak in support of the anticipated success of the program, different types of information will need to be collected. These will range from routine classroom assessments to attitude surveys of students and parents. We are pleased that the University of Alberta (Faculte St. Jean) will be assisting our staff with collecting and interpreting the data.

I request permission for your child to be involved in the collection of the information we will need to assess our program over the next two years. You will be given a schedule of the various types of information that will be collected. In all cases, the confidentiality of children and their families will be maintained, unless specific requests are made on an individual basis.

Yours sincerely,

Merv Lastiwka
Principal

I grant my permission for my child _____ to be involved in the
FULL NAME OF CHILD

assessments and evaluations deemed necessary to assess the success of the French Immersion Learning Disabilities program at Holyrood. I understand that these assessments will take place over the next two school years (1996-97/1997-98) in accordance with the attached schedule.

_____ _____
PLEASE PRINT NAME SIGNATURE

_____
DATE

Appendix C

Parents' semi-structured interview schedule

Parents' Interviews

1. Date:
2. Name of child:
3. Age:
4. Grade:
5. Is French used in the home?
6. Why is X in the FILDP?
7. Could you describe your child's school experience prior to September 1996?
8. Could you describe any type of help or support you and your child received prior to September 1996?
9. Could you describe your child's school experience since September 1996?
10. Could you describe any type of help or support you and your child received since September 1996?
11. If all of the following options were available, which do you think would be best for your child at this time, and why?

- integrated in a regular classroom with assistance being provided
- a regular class most of the time with a special class (small group) part of the time
- a special school
- a special class (small group) all day

Appendix D

Learning Disabilities Program Review: Parent Survey

LEARNING DISABILITIES (LD) PROGRAM REVIEW
PARENT SURVEY

Student's age _____ Student's grade _____ Number of years in an LD program _____

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	undecided or don't know
1. being in the LD program improved my child's academic skills					
2. being in the LD program improved my child's social skills					
3. being in the LD program improved my child's self confidence					
4. being in the LD program improved my child's ability to manage his/her learning problem					
5. being in the LD program improved my child's understanding of his/her learning problem					
6. being in the LD program improved my child's interest in school					
7. the LD program should be offered only in designated schools					
8. the LD program should emphasize remediation in language arts and mathematics rather than providing the full program of studies					
9. integration into regular classes is an important component of the LD program					
10. most LD students require long term support					
I AM SATISFIED WITH:					
11. the amount my child is learning					
12. the help my child receives					
13. the school's responsiveness to my concerns about my child					
14. the teachers' knowledge about learning disabilities					
15. the suggestions on how to help my child at home					
16. my child's involvement in planning his/her own program					
17. my involvement in planning my child's program					
18. the information I receive about my child's performance on formal assessments					
19. the consideration given to medical reports and information about my child					
20. help I receive in planning for my child's future					
21. the information received about the school and activities					
22. the number of students in the class(es)					
23. the amount of aide support					
24. the amount of integration					
25. the amount of homework my child has					
26. the computers and technology available					
27. the transportation arrangements					
IF YOUR CHILD IS INTEGRATED INTO REGULAR CLASSES answer #28 to #32. If NOT, proceed to # 33					
I AM SATISFIED WITH					
28. the help provided in the regular class(es)					
29. the regular class teachers' knowledge about learning disabilities					
30. the provisions made for my child's learning problems in the regular class(es)					
31. the range of options or courses available for my child					
32. the amount of integration provided					

BEFORE MY CHILD WAS IN THE LD PROGRAM, I WAS SATISFIED WITH:

33. the help my child received in school					
34. the school's responsiveness to my concerns about my child					
35. the information I received from the school about my child's learning problems					
36. the knowledge of the teachers regarding LD					
37. the information I received from the school about program options for my child					
38. the help I received from the school in finding the LD program					

39. What are the strengths of the LD Program?	40. What would you like to change about the LD Program?
(	(
(	(
(	(

41. What sources have been of the most help to you in understanding learning disabilities and your child's needs?

___ family member
___ previous school
___ this school
___ medical doctor
___ hospital clinic (e.g., Glenrose, University)
___ association for learning disabilities
___ books or magazine articles
___ other _____

42. Which, if any, of the following apply to your child:
___ attention deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity)
___ speech and language problems
___ behaviour problems
___ on medication for learning or behaviour problems

43. If all of the following options were available, which do you think would be best for your child at this time:

___ integrated in a regular classroom with assistance being provided
___ a regular class most of the time with a special class (small group) part of the time
___ a special class most or all of the time
___ a special school
___ other:

44. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding district programs and services for students with learning difficulties? (USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NECESSARY)

Appendix E

Two questions addressed to parents regarding changes in children over the school year

- **What I liked about the program- Positive changes I notice in my child as he/she relates to school, family, friends...**

- **What I did not like about the program- Negative changes I noticed in my child as he/she relates to school, family, friends...**

Appendix F

Learning Disabilities Program Review: Staff Survey

LEARNING DISABILITIES (LD) PROGRAM REVIEW
STAFF SURVEY

I am a: Teacher ____ Teacher Assistant ____ Other _____

in: Primary ___ Upper Elementary ___ Junior High ___ Senior High ____

Years of Experience in	Elementary	Junior High	Senior High
LD Program			
Other Special Education			
Regular			

Professional Development	# of Undergrad Courses Taken	# of Graduate Courses Taken	# of inservices, conferences, other PD in last 3 years
Learning Disabilities Other Special Education Reading or Language Arts			
Other Directly Relevant Training or Experience		Membership in Relevant Organizations (e.g., LD Association, ATA Special Ed. Council)	

PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	undecided or don't know
1. the LD program is effective in increasing the achievement of the students					
2. the LD program is effective in increasing the social skills of the students					
3. the LD program is effective in increasing the self esteem of the students					
4. the LD program is effective in increasing the ability of students to manage their learning problems					
5. the LD program is effective in increasing student's understanding of their learning problems					
6. the LD program is effective in increasing student's interest in school					
7. the LD program should be offered only in designated schools					
8. the LD program should emphasize remediation in language arts and mathematics rather than providing the full program of studies					
9. integration into regular classes is an important component of the LD program					
10. most LD students require long term support					

I AM SATISFIED WITH:					
11. my assignment					
12. the adequacy of my training for this assignment					
13. the number of students in the class(es)					
14. the amount of teacher assistant support					
15. support from my principal					
16. support from other staff in the program					
17. support from other staff in the school (not in the program)					
18. integration opportunities					
19. parental support					
20. parental involvement					
21. professional development opportunities					
22. computers and other technology available					
23. instructional resources available					
24. the access to consultants when needed					
25. the help and information received from consultants					

26. Which of the following groups of LD students do you think should be served by the Academy at King Edward:
(check one or more)
___ those from a specified geographical area
___ those whose parents prefer this location
___ those who were unsuccessful in other LD sites
___ those who have the most severe or complex learning disabilities
___ those who need a more protected environment because of emotional reasons
___ those who are expected to need LD programming for several years
___ other (specify)

27. The 1996 criteria for LD are:
- *Report of academic achievement within the current school year on four of the following academic measures which require the student to write, calculate, or respond orally, and achievement below the 10th percentile on at least two of the areas: reading comprehension, reading decoding or vocabulary, written language, spelling, mathematics. Multiple choice measures may not be used for this category*
- *Average or above average intellectual ability (IQ 100+) as measured on an individual assessment which is not more than two years old*
- *Discrepancies among or between cognitive and academic skills*
- *There must be evidence that the academic delay is not due to lack of schooling, behaviour disorder, sensory or physical handicap, English as a second language, cultural deprivation, or instruction in more than one language*

- *Reapplication is required every two years to renew eligibility and confirm that the student continues to meet the initial qualification criteria, demonstrates success in the program (through increased skills, willingness to participate, good attendance) and is recommended by the school for continued placement in a learning disabilities centre.*

Do you support the criteria? yes ____ no ____. If not, what changes to the criteria would you make?

28. What, in your opinion, are the critical factors which distinguish students who do well in the program from those who do poorly? (e.g., good attendance, parent support, high verbal IQ, etc.) Would these factors be the same of all students?

29. It has been suggested that there should be greater coordination among LD sites. It has been suggested that there be a program coordinator, the cost of which would be shared among sites. What aspects of the program require coordination?

30. What are the strengths of your school's LD Program?

31. What would you like to change about your school's LD Program?

32. What suggestions or comments do you have regarding other district programs and services for students with learning difficulties (e.g., adaptation program)?

32. What suggestions or comments do you have regarding other district programs and services for students with learning difficulties (e.g., adaptation program)?

33. Other things you would like us to know (use reverse side, if required)

Appendix G

Narrative Interview Schedule (Ellis, 1994)

Narrative Interview Schedule (Ellis, 1994)

1. If you only had to go to school three days of the week, what are some of the things you'd like to do with the extra time?
2. Have you ever done anything that other people were surprised you could do?
3. What is the most difficult thing you've ever had to do, or , is there something you've cone that was really hard to do but you really wanted to do it?
4. Some people really believe in the power of wishing. Do you think you do? Has it ever worked?
5. Do you ever get other people to go along with your ideas or what you want to do? What about in activities with friends or activities or routines at home?
6. Sometimes we like to day-dream, about things we'd like to do, or things we'd like to try, or things we'd like to become. Can you remember anything you've ever day-dreamed about?
7. Have you ever done anything really different from what most people your age have done- made something, read up on something, planned something, tried something?
8. Some people believe that willpower can take them a long way- do you think that you've ever used willpower?
9. I'm going to ask you some different kinds of questions now- questions about how you see things. For example...who do you think makes the biggest difference to what happens in the classroom: the principal, the teacher, or the students?
10. When people disagree over something, why do you think that usually is? What things would you say are most important in life to most people? What do you think will be most important in life to you?
11. In all of the things that you're interested in or that you've thought about a lot, what has puzzled you the most?
12. What's the best thing about being your age? What's the hardest thing about being your age?
13. What would you like to be really good at doing?
14. If you could pick one thing that you wouldn't have to worry about anymore, what would it be? What would be the next thing?
15. In the world of nature or in the world of things or in the world of people, what is it that surprises you the most, or that you find the most fascinating?
16. Some people really believe in the power of prayer. Do you think that you do?

17. Some people always have lots of ideas at their fingertips. You know, they always have lots of ideas about what to get someone for a present, or they find it really easy to think of things to say in a story they have to write or a letter. Other people have to work really hard to come up with ideas; or they just seem to come more slowly. Which kind or person sounds more like your? Can you think of an example of when you had lots of ideas or when you had trouble thinking or ideas?
18. Can you remember any time when you've run into difficulty when you were trying to do something or make something- something you needed was missing, something got in the way or slowed things down? What did you do?
19. Can you think or anything that's a constant nuisance or that always annoys you? What are some of the things you've tried to do about it?
20. What do you do when you need a really good idea?
21. If you could spend two weeks with someone who does a special kind of work, what kind of person would that be?
22. In the year ahead, what are some of the things you'd like to accomplish or try for the first time?
23. Is there anyone you see as a kind of hero or heroine, someone you look up to and would like to be like?
24. Do you spend very much time writing or drawing? Have you ever been in a play?
25. Is there something that you've always wanted to do but there hasn't been the opportunity (time, materials, resources) ?

Appendix H

Learning Disabilities Program Review:

Student Survey

LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM

SURVEY OF STUDENTS

HOW OLD ARE YOU?_____ WHAT GRADE ARE YOU IN?_____

1. What are the good things about your school program?

2. What would make your school program better for you?

3. How are you being helped with your learning difficulties?

4. What would you like to do when you are finished high school?

Appendix I

Bilingual Learning Disabilities Program: Eligibility Criteria

BILINGUAL LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (EPS, 1998)

Eligibility Criteria for Newly Identified Students

- Enrolled in French Immersion programming, and has had at least one year of English language arts instruction
- Severe delays in academic achievement in both languages
- Average or above average intellectual ability (I.Q. 100+) as measured on an individual assessment which includes at least 10 subtests and is not more than two years old
- Discrepancies among or between cognitive and academic skills
- The student does not exhibit aggressive behaviours.
- Evidence that the academic delay is not due to lack of schooling, sensory or physical handicap or English as a second language.

Documentation of Academic Delay: Measures administered in the current school year

English Language	French Language
Scores below the 10th percentile on measures which require the student to write, calculate, or respond orally in at least two of the following areas: • Reading comprehension • Reading decoding • Spelling • Written Language • Mathematics	Scores below 10th percentile for grade on the *Canada French Immersion Achievement Test* on at least two of: • Passage Comprehension • Word Identification • Spelling

Eligibility for continuing students who have been identified for review:

- Assessment of academic achievement within the current school year in both English and French (not multiple choice measures)
- Achievement below the 25th percentile in two or more of the following areas in both languages:
- Reading comprehension
- Reading decoding
- Spelling
- Written language
- Mathematics
- Student demonstrates success through increased skills, willingness to participate in the program and good attendance
- Statement by the principal that the student continues to require the supports provided by the LD centre